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VESTIGIA

My Mother.

(*From a drawing.*)

Vestigia

Reminiscences of Peace and War

BY LIEUT.-COLONEL

CHARLES À COURT REPINGTON

C.M.G.

COMMANDER OF THE ORDER OF LEOPOLD

OFFICER OF THE LEGION OF HONOUR

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CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS

It pleases me, for the entertainment of my descendants, to set down in this chapter a few records of my family and of my early days. These family and personal recollections are of no interest to the general reader, whom I recommend to skip and to pass on.

The Repingtons are of Norman descent and settled in Lincolnshire at the Conquest. Simon de Repington was the first of his line in the reign of William the Conqueror. His son Ralph married Audry le Fearne, and their son Roger supported the Empress Maud in her struggle for the throne with Stephen. Roger's son, Sir Richard de Repington, was slain in a joust at Woodstock in the presence of Henry II., being then seized of Fankingham, Danderbie, and Thorpe-in-the-Willowes in the county of Lincoln. He married Marian, daughter of Sir John Lowther, and their son Thomas was a soldier of note and fought in the French wars. Taken prisoner by the French after the battle of Poictiers, he was compelled to sell part of his lands in Lincolnshire to Sir Henry Marmyon for ransom. He was buried in the monastery of Sempringham.

His son Adam was Custos Rotulorum of the hundreds of Kesceven and Holland in the county of Lincoln, and was Standard Bearer to Richard II. He took the fighting Abbot of Crowland prisoner in 1397, for which

service he was rewarded with the crest ever since borne by the Repingtons—'a demi-antelope Gules, maned, bearded, tusked, and horned Or, and billetted Argent sans nombre to be borne by him and his posterity for ever.' King Richard gave him the wardship of Marian Lambard, who became his wife, and brought him lands in Long Sutton in Lincolnshire, where she was buried in 1399.

To this period belongs Philip Repington, Bishop of Lincoln and Cardinal, who had a somewhat stormy career. Educated at Oxford, he was, in his salad days, a prominent supporter of Wiclif. Appointed by the Chancellor Robert Rygge to preach at St. Frideswide's, he defended the Wiclifite doctrine on the sacrament, and is said to have stirred up the people to insurrection, declaring that temporal lords ought to be more commended in sermons than the pope or bishops. A Carmelite, Peter Stokes, 'determined' against him, and he was suspended. An appeal to John of Lancaster was unavailing, and on July 1, 1382, Repington was condemned and excommunicated. The royal letter of July 13 added that any one harbouring Repington at Oxford was to be expelled from the University. When, some years ago, I was approached to know whether I would become a professor of the art military at Oxford, I answered that I could bear any buffet of fortune except to be called professor, and that as I did not know whether John o' Gaunt's letter still had force of law it was not fair for me to subject Oxford to such perils.

The buffet given to Philip Repington did not injure him much. He made his peace with the Church and became Abbot of St. Mary de Pré at Leicester, which abbey had an ancient connection with the House of Lancaster. This brought the abbot to the notice of

Henry IV., whose close friendship he long enjoyed. In 1397 he became Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and held that office again in 1400, 1401, and 1402. Henry IV., at his accession, made Repington his chaplain and confessor, and in a document of the period the good abbot is described as 'clericus specialissimus domini regis Henrici.' He addressed, in 1401, from London, a long letter of expostulation to the King on the unhappy state of the realm. Perhaps the King did not read it; in any case his friendship stood the test, and it was to Repington that the King sent first, post haste, the news of his victory at Shrewsbury on July 21, 1403. In 1404 Repington was papally provided to the bishopric of Lincoln. The temporalities were restored on March 28, 1405, and on the following day Repington was consecrated at Canterbury.

Lollardism was now out for the bishop's blood. After the manner of a Radical paper which once called me 'the gorgeous Wreckington,' one, William Thorpe, a Lollard, in his confession, called the bishop 'Philip Rampington,' and cavilled at the manner in which 'he pursueth Christ's people.' No bishop in this land, he adds, pursueth them more sharply. However, on September 18, 1408, Repington was created a cardinal, under the title of SS. Nereus and Achilleius, by Gregory XII. Up to that date it had been held that a cardinalate and a bishopric could not be held together in England by one and the same person, but the King made his own precedents, and Repington retained his bishopric till 1419 and died about 1424. He wrote many works and sermons, which survive in the Bodleian Library and in the MS. of various colleges at Oxford and Cambridge. He was a benefactor of the library at Oxford, and is described as 'a powerful and God-fearing man, a

lover of truth and a hater of avarice.' He was buried in Lincoln Cathedral, near the grave of Grosseteste, another famous Bishop of Lincoln. His tomb bore the inscription :—

> MARMORIS IN TUMBA SIMPLEX SINE FELLE COLUMBA
> REPINGTON NATUS JACET HIC PHILIPPUS HUMATUS.
> FLOS ADAMAS CLERI, PASTOR GREGIS AC PRECO VERI,
> VIVAT UT IN COELIS QUEM POSCAT QUIQUE FIDELIS.[1]

At the Cardinal-Bishop's death, the Repingtons migrated from Lincolnshire to Warwickshire. William Repington then bought the Amington Hall estate, and the connection of the family with Tamworth began. It was destined to be long continued. The family went on from father to son for seven hundred years after the Conquest without a break—*vide* Burke's *Commoners* and *The History of Tamworth*—and brought connections with the Scropes of Bolton, Poyntzes, Worseleys, Baskervilles, de Rochfords, Peytons, Cottons, Talbots, Littletons, Vavasors, Sebrights, Calthorpes, Cholmleys, and many others. The earliest authentic portrait of the family which I possess is that, dated 1650, of Dame Margaret, daughter of Sir Edward Littleton of Pillaton, and wife of Sir John Repington of Amington. Her son married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Edward Sebright, whose son married a daughter of Sir Thomas Burdett of Formark, which lady for some inscrutable reason brought the 'Burdett Drummer' with her to Amington. Whenever a Burdett has died since 1662 the drummer has announced the death in advance, and to this occurrence witness is borne by family tradition and by the record of county history. This curious event last happened only a few years ago when my tenant Mr. Sydney

[1] *Vide* the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

General À Court Repington
(of Amington Hall, Warwickshire),
Colonel-in-Chief 41st Regiment.

(*From a drawing.*)

Fisher was awakened one night by the tapping, and several of the cottagers round also heard it. Fisher mentioned it to me as a strange occurrence, and I then told him of the drummer, of whom he had never before heard tell. Sure enough, on this occasion, another Burdett died. I inquired about the drummer from the Burdetts many years ago, but although they knew the story they could not tell me the origin of it.

The Vernon portraits in my collection come from Jane Vernon, daughter of Sir Thomas Vernon, M.P. for the City of London, who married Gilbert Repington early in the eighteenth century, and from marriages between the two daughters and co-heiresses of Thomas Vernon of Twickenham Park with General William à Court and Charles Repington respectively. Portraits of all these people are now in my possession, and the Vandyck of Charles I. came down from Sir Thomas Vernon, who was a noted Royalist. The Twickenham property came down jointly to my father and the second Lord Heytesbury from these marriages, but early in my father's life Lord Heytesbury induced him, against his better judgment, to sell the estate, which has, of course, become very valuable since, and I never pass Twickenham without vexation.

The à Courts are Wiltshire folk, and in old days represented Heytesbury in Parliament. When the Isle of Wight property came to them from the Holmes's they had more political weight, and the party managers had to look after them. But some of them voted as they pleased, and the General William à Court above mentioned, after a distinguished military career, was deprived of his command of a regiment of the Guards for voting against the Court party and the Royal Warrants in Parliament. His son married Lætitia

Wyndham, a Wiltshire lady, descended[1] through a long line of Howards and Wyndhams from Edward I. and Margaret of France, daughter of Philip III. Lætitia's eldest son married Rebecca Bouverie of Lord Radnor's family, and became first Sir William à Court, Envoy Extraordinary to Spain 1822, then Lord Heytesbury, Ambassador to Portugal 1824, Ambassador to Russia 1828 to 1832, and Viceroy of Ireland 1844 to 1846. He was appointed Viceroy of India by Sir Robert Peel's Government in 1835, but the Government fell before he sailed. He was opposed to the policy of the First Afghan War, and was known as Wellington's favourite ambassador. By a voyage to Morocco he did much to sustain the army in the Peninsula. He accompanied the Tsar across the Danube in the war against Turkey in 1828. His brother, my grandfather, General Charles Ashe à Court, M.P. for Heytesbury, made his home at Heytesbury, and looked after the place while his brother was abroad on diplomatic missions. One of Lord Heytesbury's daughters married the Hon. Philip Bouverie, youngest son of Lord Radnor, and another married the Hon. William Eliot, afterwards Lord St. Germans. Lord Heytesbury's other brother, Admiral à Court, was the hero of one of the most famous cutting-out exploits of the great war with France, and the story is told in James's *Naval History*. The name of Repington, under the terms of an old will, was assumed by all the à Courts in turn as they succeeded to the Amington Estate, and I followed the rule when my father died in 1903.

My mother was Emily Currie, daughter of Mr. Henry Currie the banker. The family place was East Horsley, but my grandfather's eldest brother William, who lived

[1] See Burke's *History of the Royal Families of Great Britain.*

A Currie Family Group.

From left to right—Emily Currie, Philip, afterwards Lord Currie, Captain Francis Currie, Mary Raikes Currie, Sir Edward Sullivan, and Mary Currie.

much abroad, sold it to Lord Lovelace about the year 1840, to my grandfather's extreme annoyance. William Currie was a rich man, handsome and intellectual, but delicate in health. He was a great connoisseur and collector of works of art, and had excellent taste. He left his valuable collection of engraved gems to the Uffizi Gallery at Florence. My grandfather lived at West Horsley, the next large property to East Horsley on the Guildford road, and one of the most delightful places in Surrey. Here we used to meet all the Currie relations and friends, the Campbells, Webbs, Gores, Powyses, Blunts, Knoxes, Fanes, and Blackwoods amongst the relatives, and, amongst the friends and neighbours, the Scotts of Ancrum, the Ellesmeres, Lefevres, Le Marchants, Sumners, the Hankeys of Fetcham, the Lushingtons, Bonsors, Farquhars, the Evelyns of Wotton, the Drummonds of Albury, the Giffords, Combes, Estcourts, and Kings, besides my father's relatives. The old house was filled with visitors most of the year. At Ockham Park close by, the famous Dr. Lushington collected round him the cleverest folk of the day. Mr. Edward Bray, a typical old-fashioned country squire, with immense knowledge of sporting matters and of natural history, and Colonel Sumner of Hatchlands, who drove a four-in-hand and hunted the old Surrey Union, were figures that particularly appealed to boys. Mr. Bray, I recall, vowed that he had shot snipe in his boyhood over the ground on which our house in Chesham Street stood.

With East Horsley under its new owners we had a link in the marriage of my mother's cousin, Wilfrid Blunt of Crabbet Park, with Lady Anne King. Alice Blunt, his sister, was one of my mother's dearest friends, and was a sweet and attractive woman. Of

the Webbs I remember Godfrey best. He was one of the most amusing men of his day, and a delightful companion, with a rare and cultured wit, and not without fame in versifying. Francis Currie, formerly of the 79th, was an extremely handsome man and was our great Crimean hero. Philip, afterwards Lord Currie, was constantly at Horsley. He became Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and was afterwards Ambassador at Constantinople and at Rome. My mother's mother was a Knox of the Ranfurly family, granddaughter of John, brother of the first Lord Northland. 'Curly' Knox of the Scots Guards was of the same family. He was a mighty hunter, and gave me the benefit of his advice when I first fitted myself out for India. My mother always declared that I was a true Knox, and when I saw the Ranfurly family portraits at Northland House, in County Tyrone, I was inclined to agree with her.

I was born in Chesham Street on January 29, 1858, and look back to my early days with very happy memories. I had the best mother in the world. We were devoted to each other, and she was to the last my firmest partisan. My father spent the whole of his life in doing kindnesses for other people, and was the only man I have ever known who would have died for the Church of England. He was a Peelite in politics, and was M.P. for Wilton. Until the death of my grandfather we were a great deal at Amington. The old Tudor house, built on the site of an old abbey and surrounded by stews, had been converted into the home farm early in the eighteenth century, and my cousin, Edward Repington, had in 1838 built a comfortable house on the slope of the hill to the north of the park, surrounded by pleasant gardens and grounds. When

Elizabeth Herbert,
Afterwards Lady Herbert of Lea.

my father took a Government post in London he let Amington to the Henry Leighs, who lived there for many years. Occasionally I went down there, and I recall particularly the consecration of Amington Church, which, with the schools, was built by my father on ground which he presented for the purpose. The shell of the church cost £10,000. My father was patron of the living of Tamworth, and was indefatigable in doing everything that he could for the Church and the estate.

Gerry, Bunny, Evey, Cecil, and Alice were the Leigh children. Gerry was afterwards in the Life Guards. Bunny became a great racing man, and was always very popular. Evey married Lord Alington, and Alice married my Eton and Sandhurst contemporary, Dick Fort of King's Standing, and afterwards Master of the Meynell. They were all very nice people, and Henry Leigh was an excellent tenant. When he died he had 1700 dozen of choice wines in our cellars. The Robert Peels at Drayton, the Inges of Thorpe, and the Wolferstans of Statfold were our nearest neighbours. It is to the great Sir Robert Peel, when he was Prime Minister, that we owe, I believe, the tracing of the London and North-Western Railway through Tamworth and the Amington estate. It suited Drayton, and what suited Drayton suited us. It was from Drayton that Sidney Herbert rode over one day to Amington to propose for the hand of my father's beautiful and only sister Elizabeth, better known afterwards as Lady Herbert of Lea. Her sons George and Sidney became the 13th and 14th Earls of Pembroke.

When Amington was let we lived in London and at Horsley. Our house in London, No. 15 Chesham Street, was Cubitt-built and was very comfortable, but there

was no bathroom, and no hot water laid on upstairs, so the maids had to lug up the bath water from the kitchen every morning, I forget up how many flights of stairs. We had an extraordinary number of male and female servants. I recall that the hall table used to be completely covered by visiting-cards every day, a dreadful social infliction from which we have happily broken free. Everybody seemed to know everybody else in those days in London, and there seemed to be only one society. Then I was away soldiering for a quarter of a century, and when I came back to live in London all was changed, and society was broken up into a great number of sets, cliques, and parties, smart and unsmart, gay and stupid, intellectual and the reverse. America, the cosmopolitans, the growth of population, and the restaurants had greatly altered London.

My sister Margey, afterwards Lady Wodehouse, and I used to ride in the Park. I recall being run away with on one occasion and thrown into the mud. I was picked up and scraped by a kindly sweep, who left me blacker than before. After I left Eton, I rode in tight blue overalls strapped over Wellington patent-leather boots, with boxspurs, a tight black coat, and a tall hat, not forgetting the then inevitable gardenia. How we could have borne it I cannot imagine now when all is for comfort. I went to a day school first at the Miss Leeches'. They were sisters of John Leech, the famous *Punch* artist, and most of the boys there came on with me to Eton. It was, I think, a very good school. One of our chief houses of call in London was in Halkin Street, where my father's mother lived. She was a delightful old lady, of remarkable character, very clever and sympathetic, full of recollections, skilled in all

woman's work, and kindness itself. Her house was always full of her old friends, and my father and aunt were both unremitting in their care of her. She was Mary Gibbs, of the family of Lord Aldenham. Her grandfather was Sir James Douglas, who held some diplomatic post in Italy and married a noted Spanish beauty. My grandmother had lived much abroad at Palermo, where her father had a house at the time of the battle of the Nile. At Palermo she was brought into touch with Nelson, who once took her to England in his flagship, and also with Lady Hamilton. My three-cornered locket with Nelson's hair in it, the powder still adhering to the crystal, and a miniature of Lady Hamilton by an Italian artist, were both presents to her from the hero and his Emma. The miniature is not like Romney's fictions, but it answers most faithfully to contemporary descriptions of Lady Hamilton, and I believe it to be probably the most lifelike portrait extant. In fact, it explains Emma as no Romney portrait does. My grandfather served in Sicily under Lord Henry Bentinck at the time of the British occupation, and there met his future wife. He gained renown in many battles and sieges, and when Sicily was invaded by Murat he drove the enemy into the sea, captured one thousand prisoners, and took the enemy's standard with his own hand. He was afterwards Colonel-in-Chief of the 41st Regiment.

Our chief cronies in London were the Herbert, Campbell, Daly, Sullivan, Currie, and other children of relatives. My mother's sister had married an Irish baronet, Sir Edward Sullivan, a wit, a yachtsman, and a man of the world, who was a fascinating conversationalist, and was always very kind to me. Gladstone was his *bête noire*, and Uncle Teddy's fulminations

against him in the *Morning Post* were a great feature in the polemics of the time. Their daughter Maud was a great ally of mine. My Herbert contemporaries were the two youngest children, Mungo, who became Sir Michael Herbert and Ambassador at Washington, and Gladys, who married first Lord Lonsdale, and afterwards Lord de Grey, subsequently Marquess of Ripon. Mungo and I went to Brighton to a school kept by a famous Mrs. Walker at Connaught House, Montpelier Road, and here we had with us a quantity of Lytteltons, Portals, Fortescues, Wallops, Somers-Cocks's, Steeles, Boroughs, Fanes, Noels, Northcotes, Drummonds, Mostyns, Barclays, Alexanders, and others, most of whom came on to Eton. The old lady, naturally known to us as Hookey Walker, was a striking character, but the teaching of the masters was not particularly good. We had to walk a longish way to our playground, where, as Alfred Lyttelton has left on record, there was a very rough pitch. We learned to swim at Brill's Baths, and we attended a good gymnasium. We also learnt dancing, and quite abominably. I fancy that Walker's was at this time one of the most fashionable preparatory schools of the day, but I am not sure that it deserved the distinction from the scholastic point of view. However, it is curious, as Sir Seymour Fortescue has often reminded me, that most of our contemporaries at Hookey's lived to a ripe age and distinguished themselves in various walks of life.

In the holidays we paid visits at Heytesbury, Wilton, and other houses of relatives and friends, but after we left Amington my most vivid boyish recollections are of dear Horsley. West Horsley Place is a fine old Elizabethan house, of soft-toned red brick and tiles,

West Horsley Place, Surrey.

with good gardens and extensive grounds and park. The rooms are large, there is a beautiful oak staircase rising from the stone-paved hall, and portraits of the best-known men and women of the time of Charles I., Charles II., and James II. hung upon the walls. Here once lived the son and the widow of Sir Walter Ralegh, and a full-length portrait of him hung upon the stairs. The Raleghs formerly owned both West Horsley Place and East Horsley. I found Sir Walter's history absorbing, and his attempts at colonisation fired my imagination. Two noble deerhounds, Dersy and Dermid, tenanted the two kennels in front of the house. At Horsley I had my own pony, my own garden, and my own pack of beagles, not to speak of rabbits and other pets. John Arthur, the coachman, taught me to ride almost as soon as I could walk, and my sister was a good horsewoman. John Merritt, the keeper, always in velveteens and leggings, and with his keen, honest face beaming good nature, taught me all the field-lore that I ever knew. I remember going into the servants' hall on one occasion and finding John Merritt paying the farm hands, and keeping the tally with rats' tails, for he 'wur no scholard, Master Charlie!' Rumsey, the head gardener, was also a character. He stuffed birds and animals beautifully, and in glass cases he had the whole tale of poor Cock-robin. Cardy, the butler, was an excellent servant of the old type. His silver was always a joy to see. When he brought round the coffee his sepulchral warning 'Water in the cup,' uttered in a deep bass voice, made many a guest jump. His relays of fresh toast during breakfast were an institution, and why more houses do not imitate it I cannot think.

My mother and her father never walked if they could

ride. They lived on horseback, and always rode beautiful thoroughbred animals, and were great horse lovers. My grandfather used to ride up to London, changing horses on the way, and ride back in the evening after doing his work. It was a matter of fifty miles to London and back, and he went at a hand gallop all the way on the grass which at that time bordered the roads. He was a big, powerful man of wonderful physique, and was a great hunting man in Northamptonshire in his youth. From Horsley we rode up over the sheep-leas to the North Downs without leaving the estate, and thence along the hills and into every cranny and corner of them. We had a house on the top of the hills called Hillside, and my grandfather used to move to this hill station in the hot weather. The Horsley gardens were famous for their fruit and vegetables, and I have never tasted better grapes than the Muscat, Sweet Water, and Black Hamburg varieties which filled the greenhouses, nor did I ever see better herbaceous borders, filled with such a variety of old-fashioned flowers, as those which bordered the broad grass path which ran down the centre of the kitchen garden past the old sundial.

My grandfather farmed a good deal of ground and had some splendid cart-horses, a fine herd of Alderneys, South Down sheep, and black Berkshire pigs. When the beechmasts fell in the woods round the sheep-leas the pigs of all ages and sizes were driven up by a boy to the feeding-ground, and when they had gorged themselves they raced down hill again for water at full gallop, reminding me of the Galilean swine, and then raced back again. The Horsley straw was much in request for making straw hats, and when the barns were being emptied we had some quite grand ratting. The winter ferreting was also a delight, but it was just about the

Mr. Henry Currie.

(*From a drawing.*)

coldest sport in the world, and I was often so numb with cold that I could not feel the trigger. My grandfather was impervious to cold, and careless of comforts for himself. He never had a fire in his room, and wished us to become as hardened as he was. The cold at Horsley in the winter was simply awful.

In Surrey my grandfather was known as the Tsar. He liked to have his own way. Many people were terribly afraid of him, and when he began to storm it was time to clear out, but he was the kindest and most generous of men, and we boys were perfectly devoted to him. He was a Tory of the old school. He hated railways as much as my mother afterwards hated motor cars, and he horse-whipped off the estate the first railway surveyors who came our way to prospect for a line. He kept the railway away from Horsley to the day of his death. The farmers were even more conservative than he was, and when he tried to introduce some new machinery from Scotland they would have nothing to do with it. He was M.P. for Guildford, the terror of evil-doers, and loved best a poaching affray. There was a good county society in this part of Surrey in my early days. We had archery meetings, croquet matches, which I detested because the curates always won them, and ploughing matches. In the mornings the poor people came in numbers and were given milk, and heaps of faggots were stored for them in Horsley village. We also used to carry puddings, port wine, grapes, and so on to the old people when they were ill. As a boy I spent as much time as I could in riding, shooting, and in hunting the beagles on foot. The great house, with its mysteries, odd corners, and secret rooms, made an ideal playground in wet weather. The daffodils and cowslips in the park were of uncommon excellence, while

we found some rare wild flowers in the sequestered parts of the sheep-leas. My Currie grandfather died in 1875, and was buried on the hill near Guildford at St. Martha's, which he had helped to restore. Godfrey Webb wrote the following lines in memory of him :—

No hearse, no nodding plumes around,
  Nothing of pomp to tell,
But village men who toiled the ground
  He knew and loved so well.

There on the sunny slope
  They followed his behest,
There full of loving hope
  They left him to his rest.

If not without a fault
  Thro' life he bore his part
Yet know we well that vault
  Closed on the noblest heart.

Words sometimes hard, deeds ever kind,
  Heart tender at the core;
So brightest gems we often find
  Crusted in roughest ore.

Wilton is one of the noblest and the homeiest of the great houses in England, and we were always made very welcome there. I can just remember Sidney Herbert meeting us in the cloisters on our arrival, throwing me up in the air, and catching me again with the light-hearted laughter that was always so irresistible. When he died, my father and Lord de Vesci managed the Pembroke estates in Wiltshire and in Ireland, and a fairly heavy task it must have been during George Pembroke's long minority. Occasionally I visited Ireland with Mungo and Gladys Herbert, and we stayed at Mount Merrion, the Pembrokes' place near Dublin. We used to lead our servants, and our tutor who came

to us for the day, a rare dance. I remember Gladys, one pouring wet day, standing under a spout and allowing her hair and clothes to be absolutely drenched. Then she presented herself meekly for lessons, trying to look good, and of course our tutor sent her away to put on dry things, and so she escaped the lesson. If only he could have seen the gleam of triumph which she shot back at us out of her violet eyes as she went out! We also used to lock the park gates and hide the key so that the tutor could not get in, and then we went off to shoot the deer in the park with bows and arrows. Gladys was the soul of all fun and frolic, and grew up the most beautiful woman imaginable. Her brilliance and vivacity were remarkable, and her vitality knew no limits. From Mount Merrion we made many excursions in Ireland and visited the de Vescis at Abbeyleix.

I remember that my grandfather smoked cigarettes in the sixties, and I suppose that the Crimea may have introduced them. But when we went to Heytesbury, even after I was grown up, we were solemnly marched off after dinner to smoke in the kitchen, and were not allowed to smoke anywhere else, or even in the kitchen at any other time. Heytesbury is a fine big house, and there is a great collection of family pictures there, including one of my special hero, Admiral Sir Robert Holmes, who brought on two wars with the Dutch, burnt New York when it was known as New Amsterdam, destroyed a great fleet of war and merchant ships in the Texel, fought stoutly in most of the great battles against the Dutch, including the great Four Days' Fight where he did wonders, and altogether made things as lively for an enemy as a sailor should. He was M.P. in turn for Winchester, Yarmouth, and Newport, and Governor of the Isle of Wight. In the library I remember

devouring the MS. records of the first Lord Heytesbury concerning his diplomatic missions, and these papers opened up to me a vista of the great diplomatic world. The old lord was famous as a *raconteur*, and had heaps of interesting papers. But he left instructions that all were to be burnt at his death, and so far as I recall there are only the formal records of his embassies and none of the good things which make a past age speak.

The Isle of Wight property came down to the à Courts from the admiral, and the elder branch of the family call themselves Holmes à Courts.

Lord Heytesbury and his brothers sometimes corresponded in verse, and the following invitation to Heytesbury was sent by the old lord to his brother, Admiral à Court Repington of Amington, in the winter of 1851.

Old Cotley's heights are capped with Snow,
The frost-bound River sleeps below;
The Fields are mute, the Village still,
No sound is heard from Barn or Mill,
The flocks lie crouching in the Fold,
The clouds hang low, the Wind blows cold;
Stern Winter rules with iron hand,
And Fogs and Sleet deform the Land.

. . . . .

Come then, and as we circle round
The welcome hearth, whilst loudly sound
The Storms without, our thoughts shall dwell
On days long past, remember'd well,
When cheer'd by smiles, now seen no more,
We trod the Lusitanian shore;
Or onward pass'd from Calpe's strand,
To Mauritania's sun-burnt land
And sought th' Imperial Lord of Fez
Within the bowers of Mequinez;
Or eastward bound we reached the Den
Of Pirate Chiefs and Robber Men

Where tower thy verdant heights Algiers!
Land of lost hope, and fruitless tears;
Or eastward still, approached the shore,
Where stately Carthage rose of yore,
And gazed on many a shapeless mound
Of mouldering fragments scattered round;
Or turned to where the wily Bey,
Within the Bardo's Walls held sway;
Or where in wild confusion lie
The sand-girt Towers of Tripoli.

. . . . .

Fond recollections all! and well
On these may memory love to dwell.
Hope then was young, and Life was new,
And all seem'd bright, and fair, and true.
But years have past, and every day
Has torn some cherish'd hope away.
Some Prop, on which my Age relied,
Some knot, we deem'd for ever tied,
Till ruthless Death in Anger past
His keenest, heaviest blow, the last.
And now alone, and lost, I stand,
A wreck upon the barren strand!
What boots it then, that Pomp and State
And Courtly scenes have been my fate,
If all the glittering Pageants o'er,
The long-sought Home exists no more?

. . . . .

But buried deep within the breast,
All mournful thoughts, like these, shall rest,
Though send may Heaven the midnight Dream,
With such my lonely musings teem;
Our social hours no cloud shall shade,
No griefs our cheerful hearth invade,
But books and friends, or idle lay,
While the long wintry nights away!

Come then, since life is on the wane,
We thus may never meet again.
A kindly welcome, simple Cheer
It yet is mine to offer here;

But ere around yon wintry Sun,
The Earth its annual course has run,
Life's fitful dream may all be o'er,
And none be found to greet you more!

The woods at Heytesbury are very lovely in the autumn, and there is good shooting there, while the Down hares are the fleetest and the longest in the leg in all England. The shooting was not of course so good as at Wilton, where the Grovely woods show the best and highest of pheasants that any sportsman can desire to tear down out of the skies. I remember once offering £4000 for the Wilton shooting for one season on behalf of a friend. The Wilton treasures, though a few have been sold, are still illimitable: armour, paintings by the greatest masters, marbles and drawings in profusion, with many books of the rarest sort. The architecture is also very fine, and in all my wanderings I have still never seen anything to equal the double cube room for sheer majesty and perfection of style and detail. The cedars on the lawn, and the Palladian bridge at sunset on a summer's evening, are joys for the gods; but to us boys these things appealed less than the rabbits and the trout, and as my father was a fine fisherman I became fairly expert in the only sport which Horsley could not provide. I also recall some excellent fishing in the Duke of Buccleuch's waters one year in Scotland when I was young, not so much for the fishing, excellent though it was, but because I came across Carlyle's *Frederick the Great* for the first time, and could not fish, nor scarcely sleep, until I had finished it.

If I recall all these memories of boyhood now, half a century later, it is not solely for the entertainment of my descendants, but because I desire to reconstruct for myself the life of the old county families, to under-

stand the atmosphere which surrounded them, and to realise for myself the effect which these surroundings had upon the lives and thoughts of thousands of young officers on the threshold of their careers. Looking back now I understand a little better that the history and the glories of England, enshrined in the traditions of countless families, sank unconsciously and without schooling into our youthful minds, and remained there imperishably engraved upon the tablets of our hearts. We learnt to believe that the English were the salt of the earth, and England the first and greatest country in the world. Thus England became the real and true love of our lives. Our confidence in her illimitable powers, and our utter disbelief in the possibility of any earthly Power vanquishing her, became a fixed idea which nothing could eradicate and no gloom dispel. The grand open-air life of the youth of England, and the discipline of their splendid and varied games, also gave the vigour of body necessary for the service of England in distant climes, and preserved many of us from death and disease not once but a score of times.

CHAPTER II

ETON, 1871–75

I WENT to Eton in the summer half of the year 1871, and as my tutor, Mr. R. A. H. Mitchell, did not take over Day's house till the autumn, I was taken in by Sam Evans, the Eton drawing master, whose house was opposite Miss Evans's in Keats Lane and formed part of it, at all events for fagging purposes. There were only about eight boys at Sam's, so far as I can recall, and we were all made very happy there. Edward Lyttelton had promised me when he left Hookey Walker's school that I should be his fag, and when I reached Eton he was a great swell at Miss Evans's, and I was a very little boy at Sam's, and thought he would have forgotten all about it. However, he had remembered, and I found myself his fag. I expect that I was a pretty bad fag. Evans's was a famous cricketing house, and all my inclinations were for the river. I used to hurry over the duties at tea-time in order to get away to bathe or row, and this led me one day to make Edward's tea from the first kettle I saw without investigating whether the water was clean or even hot. Unfortunately it was neither, and just as I was rushing off to the river I heard my name shouted. Up I went and saw from the black looks of Edward and Alfred, and of Borrow with whom they messed, that I was in for trouble. The tea was poured out for my inspection, and I must say that it looked extraordinarily uninviting.

Edward read me a lecture, and then Alfred uttered the awful threat that if I ever did it again I should be made to stand on oilcloth with bare feet and swallow the whole of it without drawing breath! This threat had the desired effect, and I do not recall any further trouble.

In this first half at Eton there took place the last Election Saturday of Eton history, and there occurred in the evening one of the biggest rows that ever happened at Eton. The usual procession of boats had passed off all right, but when the crews marched up the Eton High Street from the rafts, many of them brought their oars with them and proceeded to try and bring down a model of a ship over a stationer's shop. It had given offence for some reason and had been torn down before, and was now again in position with 'Resurgam' painted upon it. The wet bobs had vowed to have it down again, and that day some must have lunched more well than wisely. In any case a crowd began to assemble in the gathering twilight, and soon the street between Barnes Pool and the offending shop, a little higher up the High Street and on the left, was packed with boys and townspeople, all becoming more and more unruly as the fun proceeded. I suppose that some one called up the masters, and in any case they began to appear in ones and twos, and each behaved according to his temperament. Cornish appealed to the boys in a gentle voice to go home. Warre strode up the street with a thick stick, shouting to them to go to their houses at once and laying about him, while C. C. James, commonly known as Stiggins, began to make an example by laying hold of some boys. He was very unpopular, and almost immediately became the centre of the row. Some one suggested that he

should be thrown into Barnes Pool, and immediately the mob of boys began to surge in that direction with Stiggins in their midst. I was a very small boy, and soon found myself wedged in the centre of the 'bully.' We were driven by the weight of boys up to the low wall round the pool, and I found myself at last against the wall with Stiggins fighting for dear life up against me. His fate seemed certain, and mine most uncertain, but with good pluck he fixed his fingers firmly in the collars of two biggish boys, and had the mob thrown him into the pool they would have had to throw in also those whom he had collared. Other masters, I think, including Snow, came up to help, and Stiggins got clear, but the crowd did not disperse, and I remained almost to the last, delighted with the battle, and oblivious of the fact that it was now past lock-up and that I should find the doors closed and get into a mess.

Sure enough they were. I had escaped having my name taken, probably because the masters were after larger fry, but, of course, if I rang the bell I should give myself away. Burglary occurred to me as an alternative, and there was a window half opened that invited me to try it. I managed to reach it, and after letting myself down as far as my arms would reach, dropped to the floor in the dark, and by bad luck fell on a heap of plates whose crashing would have awakened the dead. I picked myself up and flew upstairs to my room, jumped into bed just as I was, and pulled the clothes over me. Presently I heard footsteps. It was Sam Evans. He was going round to see what had happened, and presently opened my door and looked in. I lay as still as a mouse, and to my relief he went off, and I heard him going round the other rooms and then downstairs, where I knew he would find the broken

plates. He did not come back, so I undressed in the dark, and all was well. But when at breakfast next morning he told us how he alarmed a burglar who had taken to flight I nearly had a fit, and had to pretend that I had choked, as indeed I nearly had.

Evans's under the great Miss Evans, whose portrait by Sargent, now in the Eton Memorial Hall, is lifelike, was a good house, with an excellent spirit, and I was very sorry to leave it and face the unknown at Mike's. His first house was at the corner of Keats Lane, opposite the chapel, and my room faced the end of the chapel and some high trees which stood between. I fancied myself with a catapult, and used to shoot at the birds, chiefly sparrows, on the trees, with little leaden bullets. One day I knocked one over, and looking down saw that it had dropped on a master, who was examining it. Sporting instincts overcame dread of authority, and I ran down to recover my bird. I found it was 'Badger' Hale, who had taken up the poor sparrow, and was trying to find out how it met its fate. Was it a hawk, he wondered, or some other bird, or could it have flown against the chapel window? I said that anything was possible, and as I promised decent interment for the victim, I was allowed to take my prize away. There were other villainies that we used to carry on from our windows. One was the water paper-box trick. This was a box formed of tough paper and filled with water. We let it down on to the pavement and kept hold of it by an almost invisible string. It was an attractive bait, and some innocent was sure to look and see what was in the box sooner or later. Then we jerked the string up as the investigator was stooping down, with the result that the paper box burst in his face. We also occasionally heated pennies on our shovels and

threw them out red-hot to organ-grinders, whose grimaces, when they tried to pick up the coins, gave us infinite satisfaction. Cockchafers caught in the fields and let loose in school were a never-ceasing joy, and sometimes a score of these insects would be loosed together.

Mike's was not at first a good house. We were all lower boys, except a few taken over from Day's, and some of them were not acquisitions at all. However, we all played cricket, or rowed, or played fives and racquets for all we were worth, and it was a great triumph when we won our first lower boy cricket cup. We were also in for the semi-finals of the house cup at cricket when we were all lower boys and had no choices in the Eleven, the Twenty-Two, or even Sixpenny. I think that this must be a record, and we nearly won our match too, chiefly owing to the fact that we had two excellent bowlers in Charlie Pearson, who always sent down a good length ball, and Arthur Burr, who bowled very fast. We went on doing better and winning more cups every year, and in the eighties Mike's house became as famous as Evans's and Warre's in their best days. I never grew much until after I left Eton, and though I am nearly six feet now, I was never big enough at Eton to distinguish myself in games. I got my house colours, won a sweepstake or two on the river, played fives and racquets regularly, and adored football, while I became an excellent swimmer, but not so good as my cousin, Charlie Daly, who won the school diving, and was the most graceful hand at taking a header at Athens that I ever remember. The beagles and the cross-country running and jumping were also a great delight to me.

With me at Mike's in its early days there were the

Streatfeilds (Harry and Gerald), Scott-Chad, Herbert Plumer the well-known general, Sam Spry a Cornishman, Beresford-Peirse who went into the Church, Colvin, Willie Elliot, Lord Glamis and two of his brothers, Sedgwick, Hohler, Mills, King, Arthur Kennard, Lord Burghersh, Arthur Burr, Moss, Pearson, Walter Yarde-Buller, the two Astleys who became in turn Lord Hastings, Charles Hawtrey the actor, Randolph Wemyss, and others, while a succession of new arrivals came each term. Mike had also many pupils from dames' houses, and many of my boy friends from Walker's were at other houses, and many relatives besides. The great defect at Eton from my point of view was the absence of a good gymnasium and the want of good setting-up drill or Swedish exercises, while boxing and fencing were not taught except to a few 'swells.' The Volunteers partly filled the gap, but I was never tall enough while at Eton to join them. We used to have some capital passage-football in the winter evenings. The want of a good library where boys could go and enlarge their minds was a crying need in my day.

When I look back upon Eton schooling I regard it with mixed feelings, for I loved my five years at Eton, gloried in its beauties and traditions, and was in upper division when I left. But all the same I was conscious that Eton was not teaching me the things that I wanted to know, and was trying to teach me things that revolted me, particularly mathematics and classics. I wanted to learn history, geography, modern languages, literature, science, and political economy, and I had a very poor chance at Eton of obtaining anything but a smattering of any one of them. I do not agree that we learnt nothing or were lazy. We worked very hard, but at what, to my mind, were useless things, and, with

my feet planted firmly in the ground, I resisted in a mulish way all attempts to teach me dead languages and higher mathematics. I believe that I was right. Classics have left nothing with me but some ideas that I could have learnt better from a crib. We were not allowed to use cribs, and I never had one, yet when I visited a certain Headmaster's study long afterwards, I saw rows of cribs, and I felt that the Eton masters of my time had taken a mean advantage of me. I have also never found any mathematics, except simple addition, of the slightest utility in a workaday life except in the Staff College examinations, and as for mental gymnastics and accuracy of statement I dispute the contention that mathematics supply either any better than any other study.

When I was rated once at home by my people for not bringing home prizes, I was put on my mettle and vowed inwardly that I would gain one the following term. We had prizes for school work and for trials, and I laid myself out to get the prize for school work when I was 'up to' Thackeray, who was commonly called Swog. When the lists came out I heard that I was at the top of a class of some thirty or forty boys, and felt my prize to be secure. What was my disappointment and indignation when I found that Swog had rated us in school work as follows :—

Class I.
None.
Class II.
First—à Court.

Therefore I got no prize, and feeling that I had been done out of my just rights I tried no more to win scholastic honours.

I am not impressed, looking back, by the manner of the teaching. We ploughed through Xenophon without having the faintest conception where, or even through which continent, the Ten Thousand had marched, while the maps given us to draw never got beyond the Ægean and the Holy Land. I doubt whether a single boy at Eton in my day could have explained a village pump or a steam engine, and when a boy in a 'general information' paper explained capillary attraction by a reference to Absalom, I thought it a reflection on Eton and not on the boy. The best thing I did at Eton was my set of leaving verses, which I was allowed to write in Latin or Greek or English as I pleased. I chose English, and dear old Mike never believed to the day of his death that I wrote them myself. He had 'torn over' too many of my Latin verses to believe in my versifying.

My people used to come down for the Fourth of June, and usually had a break at Lord's for the Eton and Harrow match, which was a great festival; and when small boys we followed every ball, and every stroke, in absorbed interest. The Lytteltons, Jamie Ridley, Longman, Henry Whitmore, Walter Forbes, and others were great heroes to us when we were small boys, while the best football players, the Eight, and those who played racquets for Eton, all had a share of our admiration. We cared but little for the Tugs (Collegers) who won most of the prizes and scholarships, and hardly knew them by sight unless they excelled at games. Dr. Hornby was the Head in my day, and Durnford the lower master. Cornish, Ainger, Cameron, Badger Hale, Swog, and Mike were my favourite masters. The greatest public events of my day at Eton were the visit of the Shah and the review of Wolseley's little army on its return from Ashanti. Deep, indeed, was

the impression left upon all of us by the appearance of these troops. I have heard some Eton boys say in after life that they did not enjoy their life at Eton. I enjoyed every hour of it—the practice in Sixpenny, the racquets which I played regularly, the Fives which I never missed if I could get a game, the swims at Cuckoo Weir and in the main river, the beagles, the long cross-country jumping expeditions (where it was a point of honour, if one could not jump over a stream, to jump into it), the rowing, and best of all, the football, which was the most popular game of all. Hockey on the ice when one could get it was also a delight, and as I got higher up in the school the joys of Eton increased. But there were only the first beginnings of an Army Class in my day, and as I had decided to go into the Army it was thought best that I should go to a private tutor's in Germany before going up for my examination, and so in the autumn of 1875 I left Eton and proceeded abroad.

I had already done a good many journeys abroad, having visited France, Italy, Germany, Austria, Spain, and Switzerland. But these journeys were, for the greater part, along well-known tracks, and there is no particular interest in recounting them. I did a certain amount of climbing in the Alps and Pyrenees, and my alpenstock was engraved with the names of various conquered heights. I recall that one fellow-climber, whom I asked whether he had climbed a famous peak, answered that he had not left a crowd in Piccadilly to find another at the top of the Matterhorn. Occasionally I went yachting. Commodore, afterwards Admiral Sir Edmund Commerell, taught me how to sail a boat. He had a yacht called the *Vampire* which was very speedy.

In the Pyrenees one year I had my only experience of the sensation of a cavalry charge. Three of us had hired horses, and there was no place to ride in the mountains except on the roads. Coming home we wrangled about the relative speed of our mounts, and decided to put it to the test by a race. We started off, and were soon going at full gallop when, turning a corner in the mountain road, we met a diligence with three horses driven abreast coming fast towards us and only a dozen yards off. There was a precipice up on one side and down on the other. What happened to my friends I cannot recall, but there was no time to pull up. I remember charging the opposing horses and then finding myself on the road at the back of the diligence with no horse and only the reins and bridle still in my grasp. I had apparently got there by way of the air, and were it not true that cats and cornets never break their necks I suppose that I should have broken mine. The horses were all in a heap, and we had to pay for the damages rather heavily. We were a bit cut about, but nothing to hurt.

One of the pleasantest out-of-the-way corners that I discovered in those days was Mellau in the Bregenzerwald, not far from Lake Constance. It was a delightful place, and they were very delightful people. There was chamois shooting in the hills, and fair trout fishing, while our evenings were beguiled by beautiful Marie, the innkeeper's daughter, who had been the first zither player at a Vienna exhibition and played with wonderful feeling. The local people from the hills round used to frequent the inn to hold various festivals, and on these occasions there was hung up a scroll with a picture of a strange monster, half-fish, half-snake, which was supposed to inhabit Lake Constance,

and all sorts of odes were sung to it. I wondered afterwards whether the Zeppelin dirigibles, built on the lake, were considered by the good peasants to be the offspring of the monster whose praises they had sung.

CHAPTER III

GERMANY AND SANDHURST

It was the custom in my day to go to a tutor's in Germany or France in order to prepare for the army, but I do not think that it was a sensible custom from the point of view of discipline or education. The failure of public schools in England to teach foreign languages was largely the origin of the custom, but I consider it a fault to change the current of a boy's life and to remove him from the public school before the army entrance examination.

I went to the school kept by good old Colonel Roberts at Freiburg in Baden, and there forgot a good deal and learnt very little. My companions at Freiburg were Arnold and Derek Keppel, Sam Spry an Eton friend, Herbert Ainger, Sidney Parry, R. Cowper-Coles, Arthur Kennard, Julian Howard-Vyse, and a few more. The school was at 30 Moltke Strasse, and the Colonel did most of the teaching, assisted by a funny old German professor with a head like a tortoise. We played cricket and football—some German officers once came and played in spurs—on the Exercir Platz, about a mile or so distant, made expeditions up the Höllenthal and to places in the vicinity, skated a great deal during a hard winter, and I fished the Dreisam with great assiduity. But what interested me most was the German Army, and I spent many hours before the barracks, watching and taking in the military customs

of the Teutons. The German Army in the year 1876 was still in the full glory of its triumphs five years before, and nearly all the officers and the old N.C.O.'s had the Iron Cross. The discipline was extraordinarily severe. I often saw men knocked about on parade, and generally the discipline was slavish. The patient Teuton submitted to things which no Englishman would ever have stood. I admired the turn-out and the drill. Externally the army was fine, but I could never forget in later years the bullying to which the men were subjected. It is a mistake to suppose that the Germans ever loved us. Their papers in 1876 showed a feeling half of jealousy and half of contempt, but as Germany had not then started out for world-power, and had no navy, we were only amused by her ill-will, and ignored it. For another twenty-five years we worked with her, sometimes more and sometimes less, diplomatically, but the feeling against us was always there, and it needed but the stimulus of an event such as the South African War to make it explode.

The way to learn German is to go into a German family. We did not speak German at Roberts's. The old Professor we regarded as a butt, and there were too many English families in Freiburg, and too many pretty girls amongst them, for us to seek for German society. We lived with the English, and each one of us, or most of us, had his pet girl amongst the English. There was a delightful middle-aged relative of the Roberts's, Miss Gillmore, who lived with them and was a favourite with all of us. She helped to make the wheels of the house work smoothly, and we all retain an affectionate recollection of her. As for the girls, some of us became very fond of them, whereupon our

families usually swooped down from England, with all sails set, to carry us off before things went too far. I particularly remember two lovely girls. One was the belle of Freiburg, and the German officers used to compete for her smiles, but she was not a pro-German, and they had no luck. Some of us got into dreadful trouble one day for upsetting a sentry-box over a German sentry and taking away his rifle for quiet examination. The enormity of our offence was not then patent to us, and why the culprits were not shot or imprisoned for life I am not quite sure. We also used, in the terribly cold winter which I can never forget, to collect snowballs in front of the big school where there were several hundred German boys, and snowball them as they came out. We expected a hard battle as there were only four or five of us, but to my great surprise all the boys ran away and put up no fight at all. The natural German is a peaceable animal, and is only dragooned into a fighting man. Long afterwards our great armies made the same discovery.

One day we had a very close shave of being killed. We were at our football house on the edge of the Exercir Platz, and it was raining hard. We had a closed carriage waiting to take us home, and just beyond the house was a line of railway. The man in charge had lowered the bar on the Freiburg side, but had left the bar up on ours because he could see anything coming on this side, and had forgotten our carriage which was standing by his house. We all got in and shut the door, and the driver began driving the carriage across the line. As we were just on the line we saw to our horror a fast train coming at us, and at the same moment the pointsman ran out of his house shouting, seized the horse by the head, and tried to force it back. All would have

been well had not the driver lost his head and begun lashing his horse furiously. The horse, impelled both ways, ended by leaving us exactly where we were astride the line, and the train almost on us. We could not open the doors of the carriage which was an ancient vehicle, and all the windows were closed. All this passed in a few seconds, and I remember that all the faces of my companions, and mine as well, no doubt, turned ashy white. At the very last instant the pointsman swung the horse round and dragged it off the line as the express swished by. It was a precious near thing. A few years afterwards I read that Bismarck had an identically similar escape.

Arnold Keppel, afterwards Lord Albemarle, was a most talented caricaturist. He used to caricature everybody, after the manner of the famous Vanity Fair cartoonists, and when his first drawing of a German officer was put up in a shop it nearly created a local revolution. We had one great interest, namely, the opera, and we used to attend regularly at the Opera House, where, for a couple of marks, we had what we should call stalls in England. The opera was excellent. We made friends with a few of the singers. One evening *Don Giovanni* was given, and we had invited him to sup with us beforehand, and had filled him up with Markgräfler and other strange drinks. He got more and more excited as the opera proceeded, and when the small boy demons came in to take him down to hell he knocked them about so unmercifully that they fled to the wings. He was nonplussed for a moment, and then had to get on to the trap-door and go down to hell alone, looking quite sheepish. When we wanted to give a little dinner to anybody there was an excellent hotel at Freiburg called the Zähringer Hof. Here there

also assembled for meals the chief officers of the garrison or those on passage. When they sat down at table they pulled out little looking-glasses and a brush and comb and proceeded to make their toilet at the table. Occasionally we went to the beer-houses, though personally I detested beer. I was astounded at the amount of beer consumed. Certain citizens, as we got to know, spent their entire days going from one beer-house to another. They became no better than animated beer-barrels. There were several student corps, but we never fraternised much. The little English colony kept much to itself. It was a great pity. Kennard and I, bored with Freiburg, one day got leave to go to Baden-Baden by train for the day. We enjoyed it so much that we determined to see all the sights at night, and telegraphed that we had missed the last train, as indeed we had carefully managed to do. I cannot recall that we were punished when we returned to the fold, somewhat dishevelled and quite penniless, in the morning. It was a glimpse of the coming freedom, and we had made the best of it. Poor old Freiburg! I wonder whether it has been bombed out of all recollection during the war!

I joined my people in Switzerland and then returned to London, where I went to Scoones's, then in Garrick Street, to cram for the army. It was a good crammer's, and I learnt a good deal there in a short time, and, what was better, learnt how to learn, which I had never done at Eton. The army examinations were a pretty severe trial of the nerves, as there were nearly nine hundred candidates for one hundred vacancies so far as I can recall. I got in at the first attempt, chiefly owing to my French, Latin, German, and drawing, and soon found myself installed at Camberley, where General

Napier was in charge and Colonel Middelton the commandant. At Sandhurst, in 1877, I found about a dozen old Eton friends, amongst whom were Bertie Astley, Bright, Harry White, Gerard Leigh, H. F. M. Wilson, Tom Garrett, and others. Jemmy Willcocks, G. F. R. Henderson, afterwards famous for his military works, Charles Douglas, afterwards of the Cameronians, and a number of other young fellows were amongst my new friends, and I soon settled down to the work of the College. We had a capital staff of officer instructors and professors, amongst whom I recall Milner, Cooper-King, Gossett, Cautley, Carey, and others, while the gymnasium was excellent, and the riding school a great delight. I was now free of the school subjects which interested me least, and plunged into the military lore with the greatest zest and with real enjoyment. We lived an open-air life and were savagely hungry after our long mornings in the open. I must say that Sandhurst gave us very happy days, and that whether in the teaching or the play we enjoyed ourselves amazingly. The wonderful air, the lakes, the wild and lovely country, and the constant succession of open-air exercises of all kinds were a great delight, and though we wore tight red tunics, blue trousers with red piping, and shakoes, we were allowed to get into flannels in the afternoons and had a considerable measure of freedom. I rode a push-bike with a 52-inch front wheel.

We had, of course, some dreadful outsiders amongst us, as could scarcely be prevented in an open competition. I recall that three or four of these were discovered by us to have dined with the commandant's cook one night, and we decided to punish them in our own way. We took them down to the Lake and threw them in, and if they were not drowned it was not our

fault. We ringleaders were put under arrest, and were told that we should certainly be rusticated for our pains. Impenitent but gloomy, we were marched before the commandant, who then and there gave us the deuce of a rowing before all the College and made our flesh creep. We expected the worst, when, to our huge joy, after the rowing was near its end, we saw a twinkle in Middelton's eye, and he ended by saying 'and now that I have told you off and justice is satisfied, I don't mind telling you that I am d—d glad you did it,' a peroration which provoked relieved cheers and made us all devoted to the commandant until he left the service many years afterwards.

I had not put my name down for any regiment when I left Sandhurst, but one day my uncle, Sir Edward Sullivan, came to our house in Chesham Street with a telegram from Sir Dighton Probyn, who was at Sandringham, offering me a commission in the Rifle Brigade. He advised me to accept it, and I did so. I had passed out first of the four Sandhurst cadets—Astley, Wenny Coke, Fatty Wilson, and myself—who were chosen for the R.B., and so I had a choice of battalions in which there was a vacancy. The 4th Battalion was then on the Indian frontier, and I chose it in the hope of seeing service and of learning something about India. It was a great business choosing all one's kit and weapons, but at last it was all done, and, accompanied by my inseparable companion Leo, a huge mastiff, I embarked in the troopship *Jumna*, and set out for the East in the winter of 1877-78. We were full of troops, and as I was almost if not quite the junior officer on board, I had no cabin and had to content myself with a hammock swung in Pandemonium, where the atmosphere was almost unbearable and the perspiration poured from

one as one dressed for dinner. We slept on deck where we could, and got through it somehow, but I shall never forget the duties of a junior subaltern on board a transport, among which the worst were seeing the rum served out in a fœtid atmosphere between decks in a gale in the Bay of Biscay, and the nightly inspection of the women's quarters which was also part of the routine. We steamed at an average rate of ten knots, and it seemed an age before we reached Bombay and saw opened to us the marvels of the East.

2nd Lieut. Charles à Court,
4th Bn. Rifle Brigade,
India, 1878.

CHAPTER IV

INDIA

THE subaltern who lands in India for the first time views the scenes which meet his eyes with undisguised astonishment. Decidedly he is in a new world. The climate, the people, the languages, the architecture, the dresses, the vehicles, the customs of the natives, and their overwhelming numbers in comparison with the few white people seen, impress the imagination and leave the subaltern moving as in a dream. I went to an hotel. Natives came to wait upon me. One attended to my clothes, a second looked after me at meals. I thought that they were hotel servants, and only gradually discovered that they had constituted themselves my bearer and khitmutgar. I certainly did not select them. They selected me, but by what process the innocent subalterns are knocked down by auction I do not know. Mine served me very well, and remained with me until I left India for home.

The first thing to be done was to get my orders, and I went off duly to the Headquarters to receive them. The officer whom I saw had not the least notion where my battalion was. It had been on the Jowaki expedition, but where it was now he had no idea, except that it was somewhere on the N.W. frontier. I immediately suggested that I should be given two months' leave in India in order to find it. The officer looked astonished and muttered something about the d—d cheek of the

young subalterns, but, having nothing else to propose, complied with my suggestion. I wanted to see India, or something of it, before I joined, and as my path to the North-West lay through many of the great historic cities of India it seemed an unequalled opportunity for visiting them. So, after doing Bombay thoroughly, thanks to introductions which I had with me, and after purchasing a small library of books about India, I set off gaily on my travels, and visited in succession Jabalpur, Benares, Allahabad, Cawnpore, Lucknow, Agra, Delhi, Amritsar, and Lahore, finishing up at Rawal Pindi, where I was told I should learn where the battalion was.

I did all these places pretty thoroughly with the assistance of all the best books that I had secured, and have never regretted that I did so and that I refused various attractive offers, sporting and other, which would have turned me from my plan. A visit to all these entrancing cities, a view of the Taj by moonlight, and long reading about all the history of the past, were things that I would not have missed for a good deal, and I commend the idea of two months' leave to the subaltern on his arrival in India to the Indian Army authorities. A view of the most famous scenes of the Mutiny was also of tremendous interest, and I saw something of the British and Indian armies on my way up-country, particularly of the Buffs, which my Sandhurst chum, George Porter, had joined, and I remember still the magnificent appearance of this battalion on parade. The railway, in the spring of 1878 when I reached India, stopped at Jhelum, and thence onward my journey was by dak gharry along seemingly never-ending roads. At Rawal Pindi I found the 10th Hussars, visited their Colonel, Eddie Wood,

and his charming wife, and was fitted out with a racing galloway and ponies which the Colonel recommended to me. These I sent on by road to Nowshera, where my battalion was quartered, passing Attock and the Indus across a bridge of boats. Thanks to the spread of railways, travelling by dak gharry and living in dak bungalows at night are things of the past on main roads nowadays, but at twenty one enjoyed the unusual experience, and even the poor food mattered very little. The old dak gharry was a sort of glorified four-wheeled cab and was almost springless. The interior made up into a sort of couch on which Leo and I slept, while my belongings were piled upon the roof of the vehicle, and amongst them my two servants made themselves at home. The wretched tats that drew the gharry were usually bad starters, but, once off, they got over the ground at a fair pace, and, in spite of dust and heat and the continual jolting, sleep was possible. At twenty everything is possible.

The arrival of a new subaltern at the quarters of his regiment creates a certain languid interest amongst the officers and is awe-inspiring to the subaltern. The 4th Battalion of the Rifle Brigade was a good battalion even in those days. It was often afterwards my home, and I always loved it. Colonel Newdegate, a typical Warwickshire country gentleman, then commanded it, and amongst the officers were Major Dashwood, Walpole, Wilson, Fitzherbert, who was my captain, Francis Howard, Jenico Preston, Lord Ossulston, Jack Mansell, Boy Hornby, Pemberton, St. Paul, Hammond, Leslie, Fatty Wilson, and other good men famous with gun and rifle and in the polo field. They were keen soldiers too, and a turn in Jowaki land had given them infinite pleasure. Quail abounded, and we made up

parties to shoot them. Occasionally I went out after them alone. On one of these occasions I crossed the Cabul River in a ferry boat with a small party of natives who were armed with nets and cords. I only brought down a few quail, but on returning in the evening with the same party found that they had made a large bag. Exercised at the reason for their luck, I offered to go with them on another occasion, and the opportunity was soon found. When the party reached the ground they fixed upon patches of crops where quail were likely to be found, and then a few of the party crawled up quietly to one end of the patch and netted it over. They then crawled away and lay down, while other men with the cord crawled up to the other end of the patch and began noiselessly working their cord through the crop, each end of the cord held by a man crouching outside the patch. The result was to cause the quail to run slowly forward and not to flush them. When they reached the netted end they tried to rise, but the net stopped them and the whole party of natives flung themselves on the net and made a good bag. It was humiliating that native poachers with such simple plant should so defeat us with our expensive 12-bore scatter guns, but I suppose that this method of catching quail may have been practised by natives of India in the time of Alexander or before his day, and I can only say that it was extraordinarily effective.

I was put to do a recruit's course of drill and gymnastics under the Sergeant-Major, and a company of the men were told off as my victims. It was an oldish battalion, and the men were all of a certain length of service. They always did the right thing whether I gave the right order or not. One day there were two long-service and self-possessed men on the right of the

company seen to be talking by the Sergeant-Major. 'Now, then, you two,' said he to them sarcastically, 'if you want to talk, take two steps to the front and continue your conversation!' The two sprang sharply to attention, took two paces to the front as one man, stood at ease together, and then leant on their rifles and went on with their talk. The Sergeant-Major turned purple and spluttered with anger, but words failed him, for they had only obeyed him, and I never saw a man so put out. My duties did not last very long, for after a month or two, the weather having become ferociously hot, I found I could not do the simplest things in the gymnasium, was advised that I had a high temperature, and was ordered to bed. I had what was then called simple continued fever, but I fancy that we should now call it typhoid. Anyhow I was desperately ill, lost all consciousness, and was considered as good as gone. Thanks to Wright, the excellent regimental doctor, to good nursing by my soldier servant, who obediently drank all my champagne when I was getting better, and to a strong constitution, I eventually pulled round and was well enough to go off to the hills. I was as weak as a cat and could not stand, but I managed the dak gharry journey back to Rawal Pindi, arrived there more dead than alive, was transferred either there or somewhere else into a dhooly and carried up to Murree head downwards through the night, being constantly bumped against the trees as my hillmen bearers took short cuts through the woods. I was due to arrive at Fir Hill House, my Colonel's hill resort, then tenanted by the Eddie Woods, and I was duly deposited at the foot of the steps leading up to the verandah about dawn, and my bearers left me there while they went off to eat and smoke. By this time I

had collapsed, and when Mrs. Wood came out on the verandah in the morning she found me still in the dhooly and unable to move. I was carried in and most hospitably treated by these two dear people, whose kindness, combined with the life-giving air of the hills, gradually pulled me round.

When I was convalescent I moved to the Murree Club, and had a glimpse of Indian hill-station life in the summer months. People were all very kind and friendly. We made up picnic parties, and I visited the Gullies to see Moir of the 17th and his fine regiment. The majesty of the Himalayas remains indelibly impressed on my memory to this day, and I was never tired of surveying the stupendous and beautiful views which they present. We had dances at the club, and on one of these occasions a friend of mine who was a subaltern in the 10th Hussars, and his partner, a fair lady, were lost when the time came for leaving. We searched all round and could find no trace of them. Things were looking bad when I happened to go up to my rooms which were on the top floor, and there, in front of my door on the balcony, I saw Leo, my mastiff, growling ominously, and with his long fangs showing and his feet planted across my door. I came up, and there near the doorway were the white faces of my friend and his girl, who had apparently been shepherded into my room by Master Leo on his return from a ramble, and had been kept there by him for some hours. I forget how we explained matters, but I remember that the explanation was considered eminently unsatisfactory. When explanations of unusual occurrences are simple I have always found that nobody believes them.

But more important events were at hand than the

trivial episodes of Indian hill-station life. The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 had been followed by much agitation along the frontier, and news arrived that a Russian military mission had reached Cabul and had been hospitably entertained by the Amir Shere Ali. Lord Lytton was then Viceroy, and Disraeli Prime Minister at home. Few of us ordinary folk knew what was happening in Central Asia, but I received regularly the *Revue Militaire* from Paris, and learnt from it all about the three Russian columns which had, as a diversion, justified by our support of the Turkish cause, been directed to threaten us in Asia. I published the facts and the composition of the columns in the *Pioneer*, and this was, I think, my first contribution to the Press. It aroused much interest, and soon we learnt that a mission under Cavagnari was about to demand passage to Cabul in order to checkmate the Russian plans. This mission was turned back by the Afghans when it reached the Khaibar Pass, and after a period of excitement it was learnt with delight by all soldiers that Cavagnari's passage to Cabul was to be opened by our bayonets.

I was not nearly fit, but determined to rejoin in the general confusion, and, as no transport was available, Hornby, Ossulston, and I, each with a small parcel of clothes, waylaid the mail cart, boarded it, and made the best of our way to Rawal Pindi, whence we proceeded to Nowshera to rejoin. We soon learnt that we were detailed for the Khaibar column, which was to be commanded by the popular one-armed hero, Sir Sam Browne, and to Peshawar I proceeded, after a brief visit to Cherat, where we had some companies, and marched in with a half battalion in the course of October. I remember the last lap into Peshawar

because I was on baggage guard and had to solve my first military problem. We had just enough mules to carry our baggage, but when the half-battalion had marched off, and I proceeded to load up, I found that several of the mules were intractable, and, after kicking off their loads, galloped all over the country. All that I could think of was to load up the well-behaved mules, take their loads a certain distance, and then return for the other loads which I had left under a guard. This made a long day of it, and I had a bad quarter of an hour for my delay on the road when I met the adjutant, Jenico Preston. But he was a very good fellow and soon understood. I recall my almost complete ignorance of military manners at this time by another absurd little episode as we marched into Peshawar. A native guard turned out and presented arms to us. I felt that I ought to do something, but I did not know what. My sergeant warningly said, 'There 's a guard turned out on the right, Sir!' As if I did not know it! But what one did to a guard that had turned out, I had not the faintest idea. So, by way of being civil, I waved my hand to it in a friendly way, as much as to say, 'All right, I see you, thanks so much,' whereupon, to my relief, the guard turned in.

Peshawar was a very unhealthy place in those days, and in October Peshawar fever was rampant. The regiment had had a long grilling in the valley, and went down with the fever so fast that I think we had half our numbers in hospital within a fortnight. In our spare time we rode a great deal, and shot snipe, making some good bags. Galloping home from a shoot one day, Jack Mansell and I missed Fatty Wilson, our companion, and looking back saw that the road had broken under his pony and that he was engulfed. On

another occasion I remember Mansell's horse refusing to cross the apparently dry bed of a river. Jack was a strong rider, and forced his horse with whip and spur to try. He tried, and was up to his girths in the mud in an instant, while Jack got out again with difficulty. I used to ride out to Jamrud to visit Hamilton of the Guides—afterwards killed at Cabul—and to look at the Khaibar and surrounding hills through their long telescope which was mounted on a stand. One could then see clearly the Afghan outposts, invisible to the naked eye. Here also I met Cavagnari, the political officer, for the first time. He was head of the Mission afterwards murdered at Cabul. I passed my drill within sight of the enemy, having learnt the particular and complicated manœuvres dear to 'Nuddy,' the colonel, and only the awful fear remained that, being the youngest, I might be left behind with the sick and details.

We had a few great dinners at the mess to welcome Sir P. Haines, Commander-in-Chief in India, Sir Sam Macpherson our excellent brigadier, and others, and on one of these occasions some one said that our line of communications was to be organised on the étappen system. 'What is the étappen system?' asked the General who was our guest. Dead silence, nobody knew. Then Newdegate said, 'Who's last from school?—à Court, what is the étappen system?' I proceeded to explain it as I had learnt all about it in Germany: the 'boots' of the regiment delivered a short lecture to his eminent superiors, and as I looked about fifteen at this time it must have been all the more ridiculous. I recall our last Sunday before starting because some Bishop, whose name I forget, lost a priceless opportunity of improving the occasion. We were a sickly lot on the whole, and rather strung up.

We were open to conviction, but the good Bishop preached a sermon on the correct interpretation of a Hebrew text of no interest to anybody. I remember that the soldiers' boots began to move on the floor very soon, and when that moment comes, in a soldier audience, all hope of moving them is gone.

A story got about, and was telegraphed home, that our battalion had volunteered to storm Ali Musjid. Two revellers from another white battalion, returning home, passed our regimental guard. '*You* storm Ali Musjid indeed! Garn! you 're too sickly to find the Fort Guard!' When at last the battalion was drawn up on parade and I inspected my company, I was disposed to agree with the revellers, for the terrible Fort Attock station had taken all the stuffing out of them and they looked very pale and drawn. It was a near thing whether we went at all, and we moved heaven and earth to be sent, telegraphing to the Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward, our Colonel-in-Chief. All was well in the end, but the poor battalion, ravaged with fever before starting, and afterwards swept by cholera on the march back to India, losing Preston, Ossulston, and some one hundred and twenty men from this cause alone, came back a wreck and took long to recover.

CHAPTER V

THE KHAIBAR PASS

My share in the Second Afghan War was supremely unimportant, but our brief campaign in the Khaibar impressed upon me lessons which I never forgot, and left me with a poor idea of the military capacity of the ruling authorities in the East. Certainly we started with the immense disadvantage of having our railhead at Jhelum, and a correspondingly immense length of road communications, even in India, but this did not excuse our blank ignorance of the country immediately in front of us, or our miserable transport, wretched hospital equipment, and shortage of numbers in all units. Though we had with us up the Khaibar Archibald Forbes, the great war correspondent, nothing of this came out, and nobody thought it at all discreditable to anybody that our brigade under Macpherson should have left India under 1900 strong, or that the 10th Hussars should have been reduced at one moment to 40 mounted men on parade.

Our so-called Peshawar Valley Field Force consisted in the first operations of a single division of four brigades, numbering in all 10,000 men and some 30 guns. The brigades were commanded by Macpherson, Tytler, Brown, and Appleyard. Sir Sam Browne's orders were to capture Ali Musjid within twenty-four hours of crossing the frontier, and he was forbidden by his instructions to operate in the country to the south of

the Khaibar. Neither order should ever have been given to him. These orders were doubtless designed to forestall any hostile action of the tribesmen, and to keep the Afridis in good humour, but a general in command must be given his mission by a Government and then left to carry it out in his own way. The first order imposed upon the 1st and 2nd Brigades a physically impossible task, and very nearly wrecked Sir Sam Browne's good scheme of attack, while the second was partially responsible for the escape of the main body of the Afghan garrison. We were also much too weak, and had only three British battalions in the whole force, namely, the 17th, 81st, and ourselves. We expected to deal easily enough with Faiz Mahomed's 3600 Afghan Regulars and Militia, and his 24 guns, in Ali Musjid, despite the strong position of the fort, but the Mohmands held the Rotas Hills, 5500 feet above sea level to the north of the pass, and there was no saying what numbers of frontier bandits might not swarm in our front when fighting began. The 2nd Division, under Maude, should have been concentrated at Jamrud when we left it. It was subsequently ordered up, and took over the pass from us when we went on to Dakka and Jellalabad, but it was weak, only 6000 strong, and my general conclusion was that the people who began the campaign so light-heartedly did not understand the business of war or the situation on the frontier.

The plan of Sir Sam Browne was to advance directly upon Ali Musjid with his main body, consisting of 4500 men and 22 guns, and to turn the defence by sending Macpherson's and Tytler's brigades, under 4000 strong in all, round over the hills north of the pass, to descend upon the rear of the enemy after

sweeping away the Mohmands and others on the Rotas heights. In accordance with this plan, the 1st and 2nd Brigades left Jamrud in the evening of November 20 to carry out their turning movement, and at dawn on the morning of the 21st, the main body advanced from Jamrud upon the fort along the Mackeson road constructed during the First Afghan War and still in passable repair. The hill-tops were covered with crowds of Afridis and Mohmands. They had occupied all the front seats and the grand tier of boxes and waited to throw in their lot with the winning side. The advanced guard of our main body reached the Shahgai ridge at 10 A.M., and drove in the Afghan outposts upon the fort 2500 yards to the north. Ali Musjid is six miles from the eastern end of the pass and nine miles from Jamrud. The conical hill on which the fort stands was occupied by the enemy, who also held ridges on each side of the narrow gorge. These ridges were precipitous and difficult of access. The fort itself was an oblong building with circular towers connected by curtains, and it stood some 350 feet above the river which flows along its eastern front. The 24 Afghan guns were mounted on the southern front of the fort and on the flanking ridges. Sir Sam Browne went forward to the Shahgai ridge, and ordered Appleyard's brigade to occupy Lala Chena, so that it might be ready to assault the ridge south of the fort and west of the pass when we of the 1st Brigade appeared on the Rotas heights as we were expected to do. Other detachments occupied a lower spur of the Rotas heights to cover Appleyard's right. The guns now came up, first two Horse Artillery guns, then our three 40-prs. of the elephant battery under Major Wilson, and then Hazlerigg's field battery. These guns

opened fire on the fort, and the Afghan guns replied with an accurate fire, but fortunately only with round shot. One of these carried away the head of an artilleryman, whereupon the Sergeant-Major reported to his commander, 'Gunner Smith has lost his 'ead, Sir.'

Our guns did a lot of harm, but the enemy stuck to his guns and carried on tenaciously. Our brigade did not appear, ammunition ran short, and Cavagnari feared, if the delay was prolonged, that the tribesmen would join the enemy *en masse*. Consequently Appleyard was ordered to press on, and Brown's 4th Brigade was told to advance along the lower spurs of Rotas to support the 3rd Brigade. This movement of the 4th Brigade was checked at a precipitous cliff crowned by hostile riflemen, and, though Appleyard went forward, his advance was so slow, owing to the nature of the ground, that Sir Sam Browne determined to postpone an assault till daybreak. Before this order, carried by Lord William Beresford, reached Appleyard, some of his troops were already committed, and the 14th Sikhs and 27th Punjabis had a warm time. Sir Sam Browne, without news of his flanking movement, with all his troops of the main attack committed, and short of ammunition, must have felt that night that if the tribesmen joined the enemy he would be in a pretty tight place.

All this time we of the turning movement had been undergoing unpleasant experiences. Tytler's brigade of the Guides, 17th, and 1st Sikhs had left Jamrud at sundown on the 20th, and had reached the foothills when night closed in, and an uncommonly dark night it was. Under native guidance the brigade marched in single file along a goat-track in a deep ravine, in threading which in the dark men and even units occa-

sionally went astray, the transport animals impeded the march, and much confusion resulted. Continually fording and refording the Lashora stream, the brigade only reached Lashora at 10 P.M., and here it bivouacked for a time in order to give the troops a much-needed rest. Our 1st Brigade began the day of the 20th by a march from Hari Singh-Ka-Burj to Jamrud, but we found on arrival that our supplies and transport were not ready, so we had to wait about till 11 P.M. and only then began to follow Tytler. With our battalion there marched our particular cronies, the 4th Gurkhas, the 20th P.I., and the Hazara Mountain Battery, and as all our march was carried out in darkness, it was extremely trying, and if the Mohmands had been worth anything they would have given us a bad time. However, we stumbled and waded along all through the night, and by seven the next morning we had united with Tytler at Lashora.

The march on the 21st was hard indeed. Tytler led, his brigade always in single file, and extended over a length of three miles, and as we were behind him we were always backing and filling as checks occurred. There was neither shade nor water, and the heat of the sun, reflected from the slaty rocks around us, was terrible. For some miles the track led up the Lashora ravine with rocky hills a thousand feet high overhanging the path on our left, and a nice mess a few riflemen could have made of us. Then we came to a stage when the goat-track ran uphill and down again, and it became almost mountaineering, while the shaly soil often gave way under our feet. We were tortured with thirst, and coming at one spot to a little pool, covered with green slime, in a rock, we all drank it as though it were nectar. In the afternoon we reached

Panipal, on the col connecting Rotas heights with Tartara, and here there was spread out before us a glorious panorama on all sides. About two miles to the south of us was the Khaibar Gorge, to the north were the snowy Himalayas, and far away in the plains was the gleaming Indus. Best of all was a spring of water that was found, and, though our food had gone astray, we felt that nothing but thirst really mattered in all the world.

It was now the late afternoon. Macpherson had known and said that he could not reach his objective, the Rotas heights, on the 21st, and his calculations had been only too well justified. Sam Browne knew it too, I am sure, but his orders were imperative and we did our best to achieve the impossible. Most of the troops, including our brigade, which had been thirty-six hours under arms without sleep, were much exhausted. Our food and medical services were far in rear, and, while we could not make good Rotas this day, Tytler could not throw his brigade across the Khaibar owing to the presence of large forces of Mohmands which threatened his transport. We therefore bivouacked between Panipal and the Sapparai Flats, and, though our outposts were attacked and opened fire, no serious attempt was made to disturb us. But Tytler sent on the Guides and the 1st Sikhs towards Kata Kushtia in the Khaibar Pass, and by 4.30 on the afternoon of the 21st this detachment reached a point just above the pass and two miles in rear of Ali Musjid. They had scarcely arrived when two bodies of Afghan cavalry trotted up in succession and many were accounted for, though some dashed through the fire and others fled back to Ali Musjid. They gave the alarm, and in the night the garrison of

the fort, deserting their outposts, fled towards Jellalabad through the Bazar Valley, which was out of bounds for us owing to our political orders. The Afghan outposts only discovered on the morning of the 22nd that they had been deserted, and, marching down the pass, came in contact with the Guides and Sikhs and, after a bit of a scrimmage, eventually surrendered to them.

Our 1st Brigade started early in the morning of the 22nd to crown Rotas and clear away the Mohmands. We were now the leading battalion and hoped for a fight, but we found the entrenchments abandoned and supposed that the enemy, when he saw the fort deserted, had decided that discretion was the better part of valour. Only the 20th P.I. had a turn with the Mohmands and scattered them, bringing in some fifty prisoners. The whole of our 1st Brigade now dropped down into the Khaibar by an arduous descent of the Kor Tangi, where the mules performed unrivalled gymnastic feats, but we left a rearguard on the top for the night, and I remained with it, being done to a turn. The morning that we marched out from Peshawar I felt very ill, and soon realised that I had Peshawar fever on me. I said nothing about it for fear of being sent back, and just managed with great difficulty to scrape through the flank march without cracking up. The excitement of the promise of a good fight kept me going, but when I saw the deserted trenches of Rotas and realised that we had done our job I almost dropped in my tracks. A night on the heights revived me a little, and I crawled down the Kor Tangi in the morning, but the fever had become worse and dysentery soon added to my troubles.

We and Tytler's brigade now assembled at Kata Kushtia, where the valley expands to a breadth of

600 yards, and Sir Sam Browne went on with the Guides, 10th Hussars, 14th Sikhs, and some guns past Lala Beg, Lundi Kotal, and Lundi Khana to Dakka, which we reached too late to prevent the looting of it by the Mohmands. Lalpura, across the river, is one of the chief Mohmand towns, and the Khan came to visit us. He was well received, as the Mohmands were now on the flank of our line of communications, and had to be made much of. Macpherson and Tytler's brigades came on to Dakka, and here I grew steadily worse and was eventually invalided back to India. When my battalion went on to Basawul I lived with Gallwey, afterwards Sir Thomas Gallwey, whom I had met at Murree, and who, on this occasion and in other campaigns that followed, I found the best of good fellows, a true warm-hearted Irish friend, and the best medical officer and organiser that I have ever met.

We did not hear much at Dakka of what was happening in the pass behind us, but actually all the marauders in the country had flocked there in search of loot. Our convoys and working parties were attacked, stragglers cut off, grass-cutters not only murdered but crimped, and, in fact, every villainy was perpetrated. Our forces were too small to admit of punitive expeditions, and all that we could do was to entrench a series of posts to protect the daytime convoys and to call them in at night. I knew little about the insecurity of the pass, and so, when I was sent back in a dhooly, and found that my bearers were starting at dawn and not waiting for escort, I supposed that it was in the ordinary run of things, and I was too played out to care. All went well at first, and we plunged into the pass without any mishap. I was alone with my bearers and my faithful khitmutgar, who was a strong,

brawny fellow and a bit of a cut-throat himself. Within a mile or two of Lundi Khana I saw skipping about among the rocks a good sprinkling of hillmen and wondered what they were doing. The leading man of them came towards us from behind, apparently unarmed, and as he drew nearer I did not care for his looks, and my bearers were obviously alarmed. I covered him with my revolver as he came near and told my khitmutgar to seize and search him. This he did most promptly, pinioning his arms behind him, and on searching him my bearers found a great knife with a blade about three feet long, very heavy, and as sharp as a razor. I have it now, and a more murderous weapon it would be hard to find. I looked round and saw a lot more rascals pretty near, and thought that there was going to be trouble, but at that moment I heard a shout, and, looking towards Lundi Khana, saw a strong patrol of our troops running towards us as fast as they could. An officer on duty had seen us, and had also seen the brigands through his glasses, and his prompt action probably saved all our lives. All the cut-throats fled faster than they had come, and in a twinkling there was no sign of life. We were fired at on several occasions in the pass afterwards, but I was then travelling with the usual escort and we gave as good as we got.

These frontier banditti are the smartest robbers in the world, and many are the tales of their prowess. Nothing seemed safe from them, and for the sake of a rifle they would run almost any risks, taking arms occasionally even from the racks in our guardrooms. The story that I liked best was of an officer who lost a valuable mare out of his regimental horse lines. He offered a large reward, and the mare was brought back

by some bandit who pretended that he had found it by chance. The officer was so amazed by the theft that he told the man that he would give him 200 rupees if he would repeat the theft, warning him that the sentries on the horse lines would shoot him if they saw him. The mare was duly tethered with the usual heel ropes, and the officer kept watch near by. The night went on and nothing seemed likely to happen, when he noticed that a little heap of grass appeared to be in a different place from that in which he had first noticed it. Watching closely, he saw that whenever the sentry's back was turned, the heap came a little nearer, and finally it came close up to where the mare was tethered. The bandit then cut the heel ropes when the sentry's back was turned, and, seizing his opportunity, leaped on the mare's back and galloped off into the darkness. A shot rang out and then another, but neither shot told. The officer waited in great amusement, feeling that his money was well lost, but the moments went on, no bandit appeared, and gradually his amusement turned into fury as he realised the truth. The mare never came back. The bandit had secured both the mare and her price.

Peshawar, where I remained until ordered to England by a medical board, was often full of Afridis and other rascals whose long gaunt bodies, fierce looks, and mountaineering stride excited my admiration. They often gave the villagers around an uncommonly bad time, and they were not much better behaved among their own people. I remember that one of our 20th P.I. jemadars asked for a month's leave before we marched up the Khaibar, and was such a good man that his request was granted. He came back before his leave was up, and was asked what he had been doing. He

said, after much pressing, that he had added two storeys to his tower, 'and now, sahib, when my brother in the next house goes to fetch water I can shoot him!'

I also remember that I sent to buy a charpoy or native bedstead from Lalpura while I was at Dakka, and was cross when my emissary returned with what was apparently a child's bed, broad, but very short. The emissary declared that it was the largest bedstead in Lalpura, and on inquiry I was told that a tribesman never sleeps at full length, because if he does so he never wakes at a slight noise, such as a thieving visit from one of his amiable neighbours. He prefers to sleep with his knees tucked up to his chin, believing that in this posture he is awakened by the slightest movement. On the frontier, as elsewhere, one lives and learns.

I travelled down country by easy stages, and found the old *Jumna* at Bombay preparing to sail. I was given a berth, but she was full of ladies benefiting by a free passage home, and they quarrelled so much that I got out at Malta and decided to return home overland. I found a boat for Syracuse, and on the way learnt that she was from the Black Sea where plague was raging, and that we should probably be condemned to a long quarantine. So, when the Sicilian port authorities came on board in the dark one night, I bribed them to take me off, and it was well that I did so, for when, some three weeks later, I left Naples, the ship was still in quarantine. I spent some weeks travelling slowly through Sicily and Italy and seeing the sights. Taormina delighted me. I found Carnival time at Naples very gay, and I read *The Last Days of Pompeii* with immense pleasure at Pompeii itself. Rome, Florence, and the northern towns I passed in review in turn, and then went on from Turin to Lyons.

Here I remember an episode which made me furious at the time. After my brief campaign I thought myself a perfect veteran, and one day went to see a show that was advertised in the town. The ticket man looked at me through the opening of the box-office and dismissed me with the curt warning—'Boys under sixteen not admitted!'

The sea air had done me good, but when I returned home, I discovered that the Peshawar fever had taken firm hold, and all through the year 1879 I was fit for nothing. Regularly as clock-work at a certain hour of the day the shivering fits came on, and I covered myself with blankets and stooped over a fire on the hottest summer day. Then the hot fit followed and I went to bed perspiring profusely. Gradually I began to skip a day, then three days, then a week, but I only drove it out of my system more or less by the end of 1879, and, not being fit for foreign service for a time, exchanged into the 3rd Battalion, which was then in Dublin, where I joined it in the late autumn.

MOHMANDS.
RECONNOISSANCE MAP
OF THE
KHAIBAR PASS
by Mr G.B. Scott. Survey of India.
SHOWING ADVANCE ON ALI MUSJID
Under Sir Sam Browne V.C., K.C.B.
November 21st, 1878.
Scale of Miles
2 miles
Figures indicate heights above sea level.
British Troops
Afghan
Shangia
ASPOGHAR
5562
ALI MUSJID
ROTAS
5660
Lala Chenar
Shadi Bagial
Gullar
JAMRUD
1600 to Peshawur
Mackeson's Road
Shudannah
AFRIDIS
Kadam
Gagrai
Tangi Caves Gorge defile
Jam Darrah
4500
By permission:- From
"The Second Afghan War"
by Colonel H.B. Hanna.

CHAPTER VI

DISTURBED IRELAND

THE 3rd Battalion of the Rifle Brigade was quartered at Richmond Barracks when I reached Dublin. Major or 'Cocky' Slade was in temporary command, and amongst the other officers were Deedes, Bagot, Lord Hardinge, Philip Sidney, afterwards Lord de Lisle, Lindsay, Raikes, Verner, Lord Bennet, Craik, Victor Ward, Arthur Harrington, Tommy Peacocke, Bowles, Lord Bingham, Kenyon-Slaney, Prideaux-Brune, Dicky Ford, Morrison, Lord Boyle, Pearson, and others. We were a very happy family. The guards in Dublin were irksome to us subalterns, but there was plenty of hunting, shooting, and fishing; the Vice-Regal Lodge was an agreeable centre of social life, and Irish society generally was as hospitable and as charming as it has ever been.

When we moved to the Curragh in 1880 Parnell was the uncrowned King of Ireland and exercised a perfectly despotic sway. It was at Ennis, on September 19, that he made his speech advocating a moral Coventry for all men who owned farms from which another man had been evicted. It was a method of intimidation applied to any one who was obnoxious, and as its first important victim was Captain Boycott of Galway, it became known as boycotting, and the word has remained with us ever since. The Land League was very powerful, and by the autumn of 1880 the Govern-

ment in Ireland was completely paralysed. William Edward, better known in Ireland as 'Buckshot,' Forster, was then Chief Secretary for Ireland, and his policy, so far as concerned us soldiers, was, in case of serious trouble, to show such force that open resistance to authority should be manifestly impossible. This led at first to constant calls upon us to support the police at evictions, and we proceeded on this unpleasant mission to various districts of Ireland by train and became better acquainted with the people. Oftentimes affairs looked threatening, but Irish humour on one side, and the perfect discipline of the Royal Irish Constabulary and of the troops on the other, prevented, on numerous occasions, a serious outbreak. But things were very bad indeed, and agrarian outrages went up by leaps and bounds.

The disaffection in the West in 1880 caused most of our companies to be moved in the autumn into Galway, Connemara, and Mayo, and here we remained for the best part of a year. The 3rd R.B. companies were at Galway, Headford, Tuam, Oughterard, Ballinakill, and other places, and in turn I was at three of these stations, and found much to interest me in Irish life. I marched into Tuam first. We did not have a particularly cordial reception there, and on our gates in the morning we found painted 'Down with the Black Rifles,' with a drawing of a rifle underneath. But my mastiff Leo, who still accompanied me on my travels, was the terror of the town, and alarmed the Tuamites even more than the Black Rifles. At Tuam in those days was Henry Blake, who had married a daughter of Bernal Osborne. He was resident magistrate, and afterwards one of the five special magistrates appointed in Ireland by the Government. As Colonial Governor he had subse-

quently a great career. He was a Galway man, impressive in manner, of fine physique, thoroughly versed in Irish questions, and extremely interesting to talk to.

From Tuam I moved to Oughterard, where we occupied an old barrack near the shore of Lough Corrib, and here I spent the exceedingly hard winter of 1880-1. Near by, some of the worst outrages of this period occurred, notably the murder of Lord Mountmorres and of the Huddys; and things were so bad that many of the landlords left the country and the tenants refused to pay their rents, secured in their holdings, as they thought, by the boycott decree of Parnell. All sorts of scares were current, and the police used to send to us two or three times a week for a night patrol, when we walked sometimes for sixteen or twenty miles to search for men drilling and to impress the people. It was bitterly cold work, and in our barracks we only had peat fires which gave out little heat. In these various detachments the people only behaved badly to us on one occasion at Galway town, but we got our own back and with something to spare. The corner-boys of the town had waylaid a couple of our men returning to barracks one night, and had beaten them so unmercifully that they were almost killed. Corporal West, a stout fellow of my company, organised a counter-attack, and laid an ambuscade. Two of our men played the part of the men returning, and presently the corner-boys came out and began to attack them. A whistle was then heard, and from various dark corners there appeared riflemen armed with shillelaghs, and the corner-boys were soon pounded into a jelly. Twenty-four of them were admitted to hospital with severe contusions, and after that night our men were let alone. We had spoken in the Galway dialect.

We had plenty of rough shooting at Oughterard, and on the lake the duck were numerous, while the woodcock, especially on Lord Ardilaun's estate at Cong, and in the woods of Mr. Martin of Ross, were a great attraction. Some of the absentee landlords gave us their cock shooting, and we sent them the proceeds of our prowess. It was about all, they told us, that they got out of their estates at this time. The local Irishmen with whom we shot were uncommonly dangerous, for whenever a beater cried 'Cock,' all the guns fired, and one day, with six guns, only one gun returned unwounded. Wild geese appeared in the hard winter, and were difficult to circumvent. We did very well, and kept our larder well supplied.

The trout fishing on Lough Corrib was excellent. We had a boatman who was a great rascal, but with all the Irishman's love of sport, and we had a couple of boats in which we rowed to all parts of the lake and found out all the likely places for a good catch. There were days on Corrib when not all the wiles of the most expert fly-fisherman could induce the trout to rise, and for this reason we paid a couple of guineas for a cross-lining licence and then filled our boats with fish. It is a most deadly form of poaching. Two boats, following a parallel course about thirty yards apart and paddling quietly and slowly along, are united by a stout cord, from which there hang baits of all kinds. The roughness of the plant seemed unlikely to attract trout, but they took all baits with avidity, and I have often seen four trout on a cross-line at the same moment. The way to land them was to pull the cord to one boat or the other, and then use net or gaff, but as a big trout sometimes ran the line out, it was prudent to leave each baited hook hanging over the

gunwale of the boat. Once our boatman neglected this precaution, the line ran out, and one of the hooks became firmly implanted in the seat of his breeches. The yell which he gave could have been heard at Galway, and it was necessary to lay him on his face and cut the hook out of him. The extraordinary variety of the markings of the Corrib trout is very remarkable. We made great captures, and sent them over to our friends in England, packed in ice.

In the winter I used often to start in the dark of the morning, and row out alone to one or other of the islands, land on the windward side, and creep through the scrub to the leeward side where duck were generally to be found. On one occasion I broke my way through the ice for a couple of hours without reaching open water, and as it became light a thick mist hid everything from me. I persisted, and an hour later the fog suddenly rose, and I saw to my surprise that the whole lake was frozen over. This very rarely happens, and on this occasion I believe that some enthusiasts skated from Galway to Oughterard, so thick did the ice become. Ashford, Lord Ardilaun's place at Cong, often offered us hospitality. The first time I went there I noticed half a dozen men with guns taking post round the house in the evening, and found that they were the night watch, for Lord Ardilaun was a much-threatened man, though he was an excellent landlord, and he and his wife showed nothing but the greatest kindness to all the poor people. Instead of sticks on the hall table we had repeating rifles, and on expeditions we were each expected to take one with us. It was owing to the absence of similar precautions that Lord Mountmorres met his death. There was a dangerous spirit abroad in all the land, and the pulpit was often used to fan the flames.

We were occasionally lost on the moors, and once we were lost on Loch Corrib. We had fished late, and in returning became lost in the mist. Our boatman vowed that he knew where we were, and we went on rowing for ever so long, until at last I let out a line from my rod astern and noticed that it was always out at an angle from the boat, showing that we were going round in a circle. Then I took charge, but all that I could do was to keep a fairly straight course, and it was two in the morning before we reached land, cold and wet through. We did not know where we had landed, and decided to make for the nearest house. After walking some way we found a middling good house, and decided to try our luck. Then some one suggested that we should be taken for moonlighters and shot. So one of us pealed at the bell, and then we all took cover behind trees. Sure enough the owner looked out from a top window with a gun, and asked what the hell we wanted at this time of night. We parleyed and were eventually allowed in. Our good host not only made a spread for us, but insisted on waking up his two daughters, who came down in their dressing-gowns, with their hair down, and played duets to us for an hour. Warmed, with our hunger assuaged, and with our passion for music more than satisfied, we curled up in the drawing-room to rest, and our boatman slept on the kitchen table after copious draughts of whisky, the cook beside him in a chair. We were on the wrong side of the lake, and when we got back to Oughterard next day we found the place in some commotion about us. We were told that two officers had been drowned, and it only gradually dawned upon us that we were the drowned.

In the spring I was moved to Headford Castle, a

country house in a park, owned by the family of St. George. This was a very pleasant spot, for if there was no Corrib at our doors there was the park which sheltered a good deal of wild game, and we continued to provide ourselves with a varied diet. The people had no guns, so we were asked everywhere to kill the young rooks. The want of amusing society bored us a good deal, and I remember the excitement caused one day in our little garrison by the report that a smart lady had driven a tandem into Headford, had called for champagne, and had driven off again after remarking that it was 'damned bad.' We duly discovered who she was, and went to call. We had a picnic party on Lough Mask, going out to an island in two boats which were much too full of people. A gale sprang up, and on our return journey we were nearly capsized, baling out the water with the utmost difficulty. On one of my journeys by car, being some twenty miles from everywhere, the tyre came off. The jarvey jumped down, took off his hat, scratched his head, and then said to me in an encouraging manner, 'Begorra, your honour, a' ve bane expecting that for these last six months.' But he had waited till the tyre came off all the same. In the summer of 1881 we returned to the Curragh, and I recall that none of us could keep in step with our band which played us in. In our long night patrols we had accustomed ourselves to a much longer stride than the regulation rifleman pace, which I always thought a most unnatural cadence. Most of our officers were about a head taller than the men, and the short, quick step was, as people say of the Pagets and the Guests, an acquired taste.

At the Curragh we had hunting, racing, polo, racquets, cricket, and plenty of society. General Charlie Fraser

was in command there, and always filled his house with pretty women. He was a great favourite with us, and I used to gallop for him as extra A.D.C. The Irish race meetings, especially Punchestown, were thoroughly enjoyable, both from a social and from a racing point of view, and we were indefatigable in attending them. From the Curragh we went back to Dublin, and I was in this town when there occurred one of the most odious crimes of modern Irish history. While we had been in the West, the struggle between Gladstone's Government and Parnell had grown more bitter than ever, and while the incitements of the Irish leader and his friends had caused outrages of all kinds to increase, Gladstone had been compelled to take more and more drastic measures to preserve order. Finally, on October 12, 1881, Parnell was arrested and lodged in Kilmainham Gaol. The Adjutant-General in Ireland, Sir George Harman, afterwards an ideal Military Secretary in London, hastened to warn the Kilmainham guard of what was coming, and found that an officer of the Guards on duty was in his bath. He was placed under arrest, for it was one of the rules on guard that we should never be out of uniform.

Parnell's popularity was now at its height. He issued a manifesto telling the tenants to pay no rent until their leaders were released, and the Government countered by declaring the Land League an illegal association. A branch of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, known as the Invincibles, had taken an oath to remove all tyrants from the country, and had made unsuccessful attempts to assassinate both Lord Cowper and Mr. Forster. The so-called 'Kilmainham Treaty,' which had effected an accommodation between the Government and Parnell, led to the release of the latter on May 2, 1882, but

Cowper and Forster resigned, and Verner and I were on the guard of honour which paid the last honours to the departing Viceroy as he left Kingstown amidst the complete indifference of the people. Lord Spencer, the 'Red Earl'—so named from the colour of his beard—rode into Dublin on May 6, a very gallant figure, astride a fiery chestnut, and had a good reception. Lord Frederick Cavendish became Chief Secretary.

The Invincibles had received orders from the secret head of their association, known as No. 1, to kill Mr. Thomas Henry Burke, the Under-Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant. On the afternoon of May 6, Burke and Lord Frederick were walking home across the Phœnix Park when nine of the Invincibles, guided by James Carey, waylaid them almost abreast of the Viceregal Lodge. The Invincibles savagely attacked and killed them both with knives, and then, jumping on cars that were in waiting, got clean away. It was not till the following year that Carey and sixteen other persons were arrested. Carey turned informer, and five of his associates were hanged. Carey was spirited away to South Africa under a false name, but the Invincibles had discovered the secret, and had sent an emissary to avenge them. Carey was killed, and the avenger was hanged without disclosing the names of his associates. This crime made a tremendous stir, and we in Dublin, at Richmond Barracks, a very short distance from the scene of the murder, were naturally most excited about it, very bitter against Parnell, and contemptuous of the Government, which we considered culpably weak. We often walked up to the scene of the murder. There I discovered the reason why grass never grows on the spot where a murder has been committed. So many come to see the ground that they wear away the turf.

We were diverted from the study of troubled Ireland by other troubles in Egypt, which led to Wolseley's expedition, the battle of Tel-el-Kebir, and the rapid conquest of Lower Egypt. We fully expected to be sent out. I was appointed transport officer, and many reserves joined us. I was allowed to pick my men from the veterans of the 4th Battalion, and very efficient they were. But our hopes were dashed to the ground, and not long afterwards we were ordered to England. One curious episode of my time in Dublin comes back to me. A young subaltern, the eldest son of an Irish peer and a great ally of mine, one day disappeared and could not be found. We feared that he had been decoyed away and murdered. The Irish police knew him by sight, and vowed that he had not crossed the water to England. We advertised, and wrote and telegraphed to all his relatives and friends, and could get no news of him, so at last we determined to search the purlieus of Dublin to try to find him. An Irish detective, Arthur Harrington, and I, and a rifleman, started out in a car one desperately cold night and proceeded to search all the houses of ill-fame in Dublin. We had no idea that there were so many, and we saw some strange scenes indeed. We thought once that we had found him, for the owner of the house said that there was a young gentleman, exactly corresponding in description with our quarry, in a room upstairs on the third floor, and that he had been there for three nights. We were sure it was our man, and I dashed upstairs, tapped at the door and got no answer, tried the door and found it locked, kicked the door in—a trick learnt at Eton—found a dark room, and going to the bed pulled a figure out on to the landing by his leg. The figure sat up. It was the wrong man! To make

matters worse, a lady in scanty attire also appeared on the landing, called us every name under the sun, and, as we retreated hastily, hurled after us a wardrobe which was on the landing, and of which the glass front split into a thousand fragments. Many days later we learnt that the boy had gone to England, and had enlisted in a Hussar Regiment because his father could not keep him supplied with funds. He had to leave the army for this escapade, and I was very sorry, for I was much attached to him.

In after years, Mr. Dillon, the Nationalist member, described me once, in the House of Commons, as an enemy of Ireland. This was because I was for Ulster. I was never an enemy of Ireland, and I never met such a being. No soldier could be an enemy of a people who were such fine soldiers and fought so hard on countless fields. It was true that I was often chased out hunting by farmers armed with all sorts of weapons, and that we were often cursed and abused at evictions and on patrol; but we took all this philosophically as part of a political game, and, on the whole, even the rebellious Irish rather liked the soldiers. Far from hating the Irish I liked them, and the more I saw of them in all classes the better I liked them. But what a muddle the whole thing seemed, and how hopeless it appeared to effect union and conciliation! I carried away with me one conviction at least, namely, that only Irishmen should deal with Irishmen, for they alone understood them.

CHAPTER VII

PEACE SOLDIERING

THE life of the regimental officer in time of peace is not sufficiently interesting to dwell upon at any great length, and soldiering in the eighties of last century was not so strenuous as it became a few years later. We thought that we received half a day's pay for half a day's work, and all but a few enthusiasts acted upon this principle. We danced, hunted, shot, fished, played polo, raced, and enjoyed ourselves tremendously. We gambled a good deal, even in the messes, and I remember more than one Black Ascot which left us exceedingly crestfallen. The best part of our interest was centred in field sports, which were not, after all, a very bad preparation for the wars to follow, and, while they kept us out of a good deal of other mischief, they also left us very fit.

But all this time there was a strong under-current of seriousness with regard to our soldiering, and if there was one man more than another who fostered it, and set the example which many began to follow, it was Lord Wolseley. He was the hero of those days, as Lord Roberts was in India, and to these two men the army and the country were greatly indebted for pointing out the path which many followed. In my humble way I endeavoured to follow it. After a young officer left Sandhurst in those days, his education in the art of war practically lapsed unless he were lucky enough to get on service, and I soon realised that if I desired

to learn I should have to teach myself. I began to work directly after my return from India, and the long winter evenings in Ireland were favourable for reading. I bought all the French and German books on war that I could procure, and read all the histories that I could come by; but British military literature was very second-class in those days, and the works of Chesney, Home, and Hamley only lit up the encircling gloom. I date from the limitation of the period of command of a commanding officer to four years, and from the institution of squadron and company training, the renascence of professionalism in the army. This training gave the junior officers responsibility which had hitherto appertained to the young gunner officer alone, and gradually it effected marvels. I do not think that we liked it at first. At the time of my first company training I shared a house at Ascot for the races, and a very pleasant party we had there. I used to drive over at dawn from Ascot to Aldershot, do the training, and get back to Ascot for the first race. It would be hard to do that now, and it was, in fact, only gradually and by degrees that professionalism was grafted upon a somewhat unfruitful and reluctant stem.

All the same, professionalism had come to stay, and I began to work for the Staff College, which was the best road to success when the royal road of active service was temporarily closed to us all for want of wars. After a voyage to Italy I had surreptitiously written a book on the Italian army and had published it under an assumed name. It had a fair success, and by some means or other some of the authorities got to hear of it and they encouraged me. I continued to work, and after a trip in a Ducal liner with my battalion to Gibraltar, during which we rolled fearfully in the Bay

and lost all our horses, I returned home through Spain to go up for the examination. It was too good a chance to miss of seeing Spain. The diligence in which I travelled from Algeciras to San Fernando to strike the railway had four horses, and a boy of fourteen rode postilion the whole way except one stage, and came into San Fernando cracking his whip and smoking a large cigar amidst the plaudits of the ladies. I visited most of the chief towns, and conceived at Madrid a passion for Velasquez which has never left me.

I had a rare job to master the mathematics required for the Staff College, but, thanks to Mr. Steele of Winchester College, and then to Mr. Lynch of Scoones's, I just scraped through, and the military subjects presented no difficulty to me. I joined the Staff College in 1887, and remained there the full term of two years, passing out, I believe, with good reports, though they were never shown to me. General Clive, a Guardsman, was my first commandant, and then Lieut.-General Sir Francis Clery, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., the author of the *Minor Tactics*, upon which the youth of my day was brought up at Sandhurst. Colonel, afterwards Sir Frederick Maurice, taught us strategy and tactics, Colonel Clayton fortification, Rothwell administration, and Richards surveying. These I remember the best, though other professors and instructors helped us lame dogs over our stiles. General Clive was a most agreeable commandant, and a great friend to us all. Maurice, I loved. He lectured well and was most helpful to us all, but the best treat of all was to get him alone and to tempt him to talk. He was then a mine of information, and as he was one of Wolseley's men he had a good knowledge of what was going on. He was a lovable personality, with the heart of a

lion, and I was much attached to him. Richards and Clayton were also popular, and Rothwell understood administration better than most men in his day and taught us right well.

Many of my student comrades at the Staff College distinguished themselves in after life, and became better known as Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, Sir Gerald Kitson, Sir Beauchamp Duff, Sir George Kemball, Sir Herbert Plumer, and so on. Bewicke-Copley, Burney, J. S. S. Barker, Lawson, Baldock, Heath, Hammersley, Creagh, Burn-Murdoch, and others who rose high in the Service, were also of my day. We had a particularly nice set of young fellows there, and I do not remember any two years of my life which were more profitable or more pleasant. We had all served in different parts of the world, and we learnt a great deal from each other. We all worked hard, and the Library, which was well kept up by Lonsdale Hale, supplied us with all the literature that we required. In it I spent an unconscionable number of hours and got through a mass of reading, making notes as I went along. The Staff College was a valuable institution. The healthy, open-air life, the drag and the games, the interesting companionship, the good teaching, and the never-to-be-forgotten Library, combined with the two years of freedom from regimental duty in which we wasted so much of our time without much profit, were all a great attraction, and we finished up our course by being attached to other arms of the Service and learning something of their ways.

I was posted to the old 4th Battalion on return to regimental duty. It was in Burma, and I set out thither, travelling overland through France, Italy, and Sicily, and taking my time in order to visit towns and sights which I had missed in previous voyages. At

Malta I joined the *Crocodile*, and sailed in her to Bombay, where I put up at Government House with Neville Lyttelton, who was Military Secretary to Lord Reay, then Governor of Bombay. The Reays were very kind people. He used to read prayers in the verandah, and the guests and A.D.C.'s used to kneel on each side of a carpet facing each other. This was trying enough, but when families of crows came to sit on the railing of the verandah and cawed raucously at Lord Reay when he said Amen, it was almost more than one could bear, and I could not face the ordeal a second time. I was on my way to Madras, and Mrs. Lyttelton, a most charming and talented lady, was on her way to some hill station, so we travelled part of the way together. At Madras, which I thought a depressing place, I picked up an Indian Marine troopship, and had a pleasant voyage to Rangoon, where I arrived early in 1889.

The conquest of Upper Burma had been completed, but there was still a certain amount of partisan fighting going on, and as my company was at Meikhtila, I expected to take part in it. But my Colonel made me remain at headquarters, which were at Toungoo, in which uninteresting spot I passed an uncommonly hot summer, varying it by trips to Mandalay and Upper Burma, when I could get away, and by plunges into the hills on the side of the Shan States on elephants lent to me by the Forest Department. On one of these latter and solitary expeditions I had an unpleasant experience. I suppose that the sun caught me, for at the end of a march I could not stand, was in a high fever, and felt that my head was bursting. I lay down in the open, and within an hour there mercifully came on a terrific thunderstorm and downpour of rain, amid which I fell asleep, and woke in the morning

soaked to the skin and quite cured. On another occasion I was caught by forest fires, and only escaped by finding a clearing by a stream, round which the fire burnt itself out. The terror of the elephants was most amusing, and they were with great difficulty prevented from bolting into the flames.

The elephants were a great delight. When I lost my way in the hills, as often happened, the way in which the apparently unwieldy beasts would creep along almost impossible tracks in the hills, treading as lightly as ballet-dancers, was wonderful, and in camp I often lay for hours and watched them play, marvelling at them and their ways. We used them occasionally in our shooting expeditions when we were after snipe, and if the camel is the ship of the desert so is the elephant of the swamp. One elephant, by the way, scored off me in a swamp. I was on a shooting expedition, and seeing an unusually interesting bird's nest on a tree as we were passing under it, I told my mahout to shin up the tree and fetch it down. I was soon sorry that I had dropped my pilot. The elephant slowly moved off, and whether my curses in bad Hindustani, or the particular kind of blows which I gave him, irritated or goaded him or not, I found that he was speeding up, and at last we were going at a rare pace through the swamp. I tried everything that I could think of, all with no effect except to make him go faster, and at last he carried me under some trees and swept on, no doubt hoping that I might share the fate of Absalom and he be rid of me. I thought that it was about time we parted too, after I had had a crack or two from the boughs, and so slid down over his tail and dropped plump into the swamp. By the time that elephant, mahout, and I were reassembled I was covered with mud

and leeches, and was furious with myself for not having learnt how to sit a pad elephant and how to ride it.

Burmese football was a great game to watch. The players stand round in a little circle and toss the wicker ball to each other by striking it with the head, shoulder, thigh, calf of the leg or heel, and never with the hand. It is a game that requires great agility, quickness of eye, and power of balance, but clothes are rather in the way so I suppose that we shall never tolerate it here, though one never knows.

Talking of clothes reminds me of the Burmese ladies, who were fascinating little people. When a bevy of them come chattering through a wood into the sunlight with their bright-coloured silken clothes, their well-tired hair, and the inevitable flower and big cheroot, they are a delight to the eye. They are a laughter-loving set of lasses. One hot evening that gallant soul, Rip Metcalfe—a hero of Ladysmith and Bergandael—and I were taking a stroll on the banks of the Sittang when we saw a Burmese girl come down to the river on the other side to bathe. She was just stepping in and about to throw off her not voluminous clothes when she saw us and hesitated what to do. Then she smiled and went calmly in, and as it got deeper she raised her clothes just above the water-level, and finally, with a whisk of the hand and a shriek of laughter, flung all her garments on to the bank and sunk in the water up to her neck at the same moment, leaving us completely ignorant whether she was a Medici Venus or not. We were not so ungallant as to wait for the *sortie du bain* after such a regrettable incident. They were great little ladies. In the wilds I generally found one keeping house for some Englishman detached on forest or police work and anxious to learn Burmese. I

must say that they are perfect hostesses, with the manners of more than duchesses. I have sat in the Mandalay bazaar bargaining with them for hours over some old piece of silver. Time and the East had not even a bowing acquaintance then, nor ever will have.

Mandalay is an exquisite and unique jewel of a capital. There is nothing like it on earth. King Theebaw's wood-carvers were still there when I arrived, and I set them to make me a teak mantelpiece and overmantel with the history of Burma displayed on it. It took twenty men four months to make. It was a marvel, and I put it up in a house in London. But, like almost everything else Eastern except Chinese porcelain and Persian rugs, it would not do in an English house and I got rid of it.

Our soldiers had hard work to put down the 'rebels' after the conquest of Upper Burma. Some astonishing feats of endurance and tenacity were performed by our men in those days, but few people at home heard of them. The Mounted Infantry was the favourite arm. I remember that one newly-raised company coming out into a glade in a wood suddenly saw the Boh they were after and his gang coming out on the far side. The officer gave the order to charge, and led the way, revolver in hand. The enemy fled, and the officer looking round found that all his men had fallen off. But the way our great M.I. picked up riding and loved it was a marvel. There is nothing that the British soldier loves better than doing a fresh job. He will volunteer for anything. Once I asked my company if any of them would volunteer for the Navy in case of war. The whole lot volunteered except one old soldier, and when I asked him why he did not, he said that our Navy was too strong for any one to fight, whereas our Army was

so small that any one would fight it, so he did not see the point of changing.

Burma is a fascinating country. The luxuriant vegetation, the beautiful rivers, the temples, the gay and irresponsible people, the wonderful light-effects, the monasteries, the rice fields, and the forests are things by themselves, and when some modern Constable discovers Burma at the season when the clouds pile up nightly before the rains he will make his fortune.

I returned to England in the autumn, this time by way of Calcutta, which I wished to see. In crossing the Bay of Bengal we ran into one of the worst storms that I ever remember, and were tossed about in the most extraordinary way. The skipper told me that it was a very near thing. However, we arrived all right in the end, and after I had taken a good look round at Calcutta I set out for home, returning as usual overland and spending some time in Sicily on the way.

I was anxious to join the Intelligence Department, then under Sir Henry Brackenbury at 18 Queen Anne's Gate, because it was the nearest approach that we possessed to a modern General Staff, and there was a great deal about foreign armies that I wished to learn. In due course I became Staff Captain and then D.A.A.G. and spent the best part of five years at the work, which interested me immensely. We had a very small staff in those days. Jemmy Grierson was head of the German section, Wolfe-Murray of the Russian, Callwell of the Eastern, Hubert Foster of the Colonial Section, Trotter of the Mapping Section, and Simpson of the French Section. I joined the latter, and eventually succeeded Simpson, who was an indefatigable worker and very keen. My section had to look after France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Central and South America, and

Mexico, and not only to learn all about the military resources of these countries, but to answer questions relating to them in the House of Commons and to write papers, whenever they were needed, on every sort of question connected with them. We worked long hours and worked hard, but, with so many countries as there were in my section, two men could only do a part of the work required, and we naturally drifted into paying most attention to France, with whom we were at that time on bad terms.

I am not quite sure how we drifted into such bad relations with France, but I suspect that Germany had a hand in it, and the traditions of two-and-twenty Anglo-French wars made her task easy. On our side all the Jingoes added fuel to the flames, and on the French side the Colonial party lost no opportunity of irritating us. The affair of Siam, during the short administration of Lord Rosebery, almost brought matters to a climax, and war was not very far away from us. We weathered that storm, but all through my time in Queen Anne's Gate, we were constantly on edge in expectation of war with France, and my attention was mainly devoted to this subject. We also had much to do with the interminable boundary questions with France in Africa, and we found our neighbours hard bargainers. I went constantly abroad, mainly to France, and visited most of the French Channel coasts, gaining an extremely good knowledge of the French military system and defences. I attended French manœuvres constantly, for example, in 1891, when we first saw four French Army Corps together in the field, and on this and other occasions General de Galliffet was very civil to me. Saussier was *généralissime* in those days and de Miribel Chief

of Staff. Galliffet, with his spare, alert figure and short, cutty clay pipe, was a striking figure. I remember once when I was with him he could not get his cavalry commander to charge, and at last gave the order to an A.D.C., 'Gallop to General X. Take his left ear in your right hand, and bring him here to me personally, and at once!'

I usually made up a party of English officers for these French manœuvres, and we used to live together and discuss the operations. Sometimes we went on bicycles, and one day I remember Albert Jenner, Hubert Vernon, and I travelled sixty miles in a morning to come up with a cavalry division. We were always in mufti during these visits, and in later years, before the Great War, I became acquainted with most of the French Army Corps and traversed all the regions which have since been the scenes of the great battles of the war. We were once brought before a magistrate for spilling the water out of our baths, and the endeavours of our landlord to explain these mad practices of the Englishmen were most amusing. Eventually we were all fined, and I remember Colonel Kingscote's indignant if ungrammatical exclamation, 'Nous voyerons si je paierai!' We often had trouble near the German frontier, and one year I was stopped no less than five times.

We were allowed to send officers abroad on official missions, and one fine day there walked into my room in quest of employment, a smart, good-looking young officer, Captain Douglas Haig of the 7th Hussars, who was an acquaintance of mine. He did well in his first mission, which was, I think, to Italy, and so I sent him out again, this time to report on the French cavalry school at Saumur. Haig did this work extraordinarily well, and I sent in his report with most flattering

remarks upon it. The result was that he became A.D.C. to the Inspector of Cavalry, so that I may fairly say that I obtained for the future Commander-in-Chief of our Armies in France his first Staff job.

The Dreyfus Case began while I was at the Intelligence Department. I knew, or at least believed, that Dreyfus was innocent, and that Esterhazy, who had fed the military attachés in Paris with reports half-true and half-doctored, was the villain of the piece. The French Army was, however, so incensed with Dreyfus that nothing could be done, and we took no part in the great wrangle which rent the French Army from top to bottom, and for a long time marred the efficiency of the French services of Espionnage and Contre-espionnage. During most of this time Colonel, afterwards Sir Reginald Talbot, was our Military Attaché in Paris, and he carried out his duties with great efficiency and zeal. We corresponded all the time, and he was of the greatest help always. I always thought that the Dreyfus Case arose from malversation of secret service funds.

I did not conceive an exaggerated admiration for the German General Staff, of which I saw a good deal at this time. I thought them rather wooden, and found no men of first-class competence among them. When the Germans came here they often displayed curious habits. One of them dined at the Woolwich Mess one night in a frockcoat. This was reported to the Kaiser, who issued orders that an officer attending a British mess should wear evening dress. The German came over again, and again went to Woolwich to stay the night. He duly appeared at mess in evening clothes, and all went well, but when he appeared next morning at breakfast still in evening

clothes, the junior subalterns found it hard to keep their countenances. Like the Kaiser himself, the German officers looked awful in mufti. I took one of them to the top of the Epsom Grand Stand to see the Derby in a year that Lord Rosebery won it. He was enormously impressed by the magnitude of the crowd, which swarmed down to the stands as the winner was being brought back to weigh-out, and, looking at them open-mouthed, he exclaimed, 'Ach! what a mark for shrapnel!' It was all that occurred to him, poor man. We learnt afterwards that this frightfulness was innate.

Some twenty or more British officers, under the title of the 'Great Britain Colony,' became at this time members of the Rodensteiners, a society formed in Germany to perpetuate the memory of some Baron of the Middle Ages who had squandered the proceeds of the sale of seven villages in treating and feasting his boon companions. In Berlin this society met once a fortnight, and I shall never forget my first experience of their meeting. There were some forty-five German officers present, chiefly men of the Kaiser's Military Cabinet, the General Staff, and the Guards. Von Meckel, the great writer, and author of the famous *Sommernachtstraum*, was among the notables. We sat down at four in the afternoon, and rose from the table at four in the morning. Grierson was with me. Our healths were drunk in turn by all the officers present, and then we drank the health of all the officers of the regiments represented. No heel taps were allowed, and by the time that the drinking was over I had certainly drunk more than I should ordinarily have got through in a year, and probably more. We were saved to some extent by knowing the trick of keeping two glasses filled, one a small long glass which we emptied in giving or

in acknowledging a toast, and another, a large beaker, which we used to replenish the small one. Our hosts always tried to catch us with only the big glass full, for then we were forced to empty it. They sometimes succeeded, and how Grierson and I got home that night is a complete mystery to me to this day. But when we reached our hotel, Grierson sat on his bed and reeled off all the distinguishing marks of the German regiments from No. 1 to No. 166 inclusive, an effort of memory which I regarded, in the circumstances, as surprising and indeed unique. I suppose that a hundred years ago we were as hard drinkers as the Germans. I wonder ?

I heard a story of the great Moltke at this time, from our military attaché, Colonel Leopold Swaine, if I remember right, and he firmly believed it. On the night of Moltke's death two German officers were returning past the General Staff building at about midnight. When they reached the gate it opened, and out came Moltke. The sentry presented arms to him, and the two officers stopped to let him pass and saluted, surprised that the great man should be at the office at such an hour. In the morning they learnt, to their amazement, that Moltke was dead, and had died before the meeting at the gate. I remember wondering whether the officers were Rodensteiners, but decided they could not have been, for they would have seen many more Moltkes than one. Swaine was most useful to us in Berlin. He was a perfect German scholar, and in close touch with all the German official circles. He taught us some of the rules of official etiquette. In calling upon one grade of official one had to leave a stick in the hall ; with another grade one had to deposit a coat, and with a third, hat, stick, gloves, and coat. It was most confusing. I thought

Berlin a hideous town, and never could stand Germans, useful though they were to us at this time. I remember winning a bet from the German General Staff in a curious way. They were one day bemoaning the fact that no one could approach a certain foreign fort, and that they could not discover whether the ditch was wet or dry. I said that it did not say much for their secret service, whereupon they bet me that I could not succeed where they had failed. I took the bet, and shortly afterwards went to stay near the fort, and took a walk next day to try my luck. It was no good, as, from whatever side I approached, the sentries were on the alert. I tried at night, and almost got run through for my pains. I returned to my inn disgusted at the thought of losing my bet, and, after ordering coffee, took up a local paper and glanced through it. A paragraph met my eye. It was to the effect that 'A. B., on returning home the worse for drink, fell into the ditch of Fort X *and was drowned*.' I packed up and returned home next day with the precious rag in my pocket-book, knowing that my bet was won. I should like to tell a dozen more good stories of this time, but I suppose that it is inadmissible to recount them.

Though we had no General Staff we did our best, in close accord with the Naval Intelligence Department, which had good chiefs in my time in Sir Cyprian Bridge and Sir Reginald Custance, to prepare for war with France, and I think that we were better prepared for mopping up the French Colonial Empire at that time than we were later for the colonial part of the war with Germany. But, from the general point of view, we made no real progress towards an Expeditionary Force, nor towards the creation of a General Staff. The old Duke of Cambridge, a great favourite with the

Army, was not a reformer, and he used to tell us as much, and regularly, at each Staff College annual dinner, when he always spoke most scornfully of 'Pwogwess' and made the P.S.C. officers very clearly understand that they were no better than regimental officers, and indeed, by implication, a good deal worse. It was because we Staff College officers were regimental officers at heart that we always cheered these sentiments to the echo. The Adjutant-General, Quartermaster-General, and Military Secretary ruled the Army under the Duke, and though we had our Intelligence Department and a Mobilisation Section, which were a sort of beginning of a General Staff, we never had the real thing at this period. The Hartington Commission, spurred on by Sir Henry Brackenbury, our brilliant chief, had indeed recommended one, but Mr. Campbell-Bannerman's minority report was adverse, and most unfortunately delayed for many years more the consummation of this most desirable reform. All the same, we knew what we wanted, learnt thoroughly the best foreign General Staff organisation, and when our moment came years later we opened fire and had our way—not quite too late.

Henry Brackenbury was succeeded by Sir Edward Chapman, a most kind and considerate chief, and in his reign I began the 'Military Resources' series of works which were an advance, I think, on what we had before. Our previous efforts to enlighten the Army and the departments about foreign armies were our 'Armed Strengths' and 'Handbooks' of these armies. They were good in their way as a basis to work upon, but they had no life in them, and all questions of resources, strong places, and particularly strategical matters were not embodied in them. So, while I was at the office I

made notes as I went along upon all General Staff questions relating to France, and ultimately produced *The Military Resources of France*, which served as the model for similar accounts of other armies, which the I.D. subsequently produced. There were three large cases of maps with it, and it formed my *magnum opus* of this period. But it was secret, and the circulation was very restricted.

After leaving the Intelligence Department I returned to our 4th Battalion, which was then at Aldershot under Colonel Stopford-Sackville. It was in excellent condition, and at last I had a company all to myself. The regimental renascence of which I have already spoken was now in full swing, and we had a really excellent set of officers, as well as of N.C.O.'s, of whom my colour-sergeant, Tim Malone, was among the best. We all worked like horses to make our companies better than the others. I recall that my E Company won the shield for musketry, and the football and cricket cups, all in the same year. The Duke of Connaught was then in command at Aldershot, and, as my company was the best shooting company in the command, he rode up to me one day to ask me the reason. I replied that the reason was that I had never been to Hythe—the Musketry School not then so famous as it became later—and the Duke and all his staff roared with laughter.

Our Brigadier was the famous Sir William Butler, and we all loved him. He was a great figure, tall, portly, self-possessed, and with a rich fund of Irish humour. He was always at loggerheads in a friendly way with General Kelly-Kenny, the Duke's Chief of Staff, another Irishman, and in discussions and conferences—commonly called pow-wows—after a field opera-

tion, these two Irishmen had verbal contests of the most humorous kind. It was as good as a play, and better than most. Whatever might have happened during the field-day, Billy Butler always won at the pow-wow, and once, when he had had rather the worst of things, he described his advance as 'a triple concentric attack,' and expatiated on it in such a convincing manner, and with such serious aplomb, that I am not sure that all the officers present were not taken in. If he had not winked at me before holding forth, I should have been taken in myself. Jack Cowans was his brigade-major, and when he went away I replaced him. I remember asking Sir William when he would come to the office next day. He replied that he was not brigade-major but that I was, and had to do the work. He would come down on Thursdays to sign papers. This suited me very well, and when Thursday came round I had all the papers ready for signature. No Sir William appeared. I became anxious, and at last sent down to his hut to find out when he was coming up. The answer came back that 'Sir William has gone away for a fortnight's leave.'

It was at this period that we had manœuvres in the New Forest, and marched down there from Aldershot. It was desperately hot, and the dusty roads through the valleys, with high hedges on each side, were stifling. One division, not ours, had almost a débâcle on Otterbourne Hill, and the men all suffered very much. I remember that one day Sir William and his staff were riding in front of my company and covering us with dust. He sent back word by Cowans to ask if he could do anything for us. I replied, 'Yes, ask the General to take his staff somewhere else and not kick up the dust in our faces.' Sir William Butler loved a

reply of this kind, and I saw him shake with laughter. He knew us and looked after us. We worked for him like slaves. He defeated Sir Charles Warren very handsomely in the New Forest, and Butler's brigade was so good, handy, and efficient that I think we could have managed to win for him by ourselves.

One absurd incident of this period I remember because Sir William Butler constantly alluded to it when we met in later years. We had finished an excellent field-day, and were assembling for the pow-wow when I saw some of the staff looking at me and engaged in earnest confabulation. What on earth had I done? I was riding a beautiful chestnut charger which I had bought from a friend in the 9th Lancers, and rather fancied that my turn-out was faultless. However, I had on a pair of boots which either had, or had not, a V at the top where they reached the knee, and whichever it was, it was wrong, and all the staff talent concentrated upon me in consequence. Very likely it was wrong. The changes in dress regulations were so frequent that one could not keep pace with them, but this unlucky V, which was not more than half an inch long and almost unnoticeable, was a dreadful cause of offence. All the lessons of a most admirable field-day were forgotten, and the V was almost the only subject that was spoken of. Sir William was always most sarcastic about it. 'Do you remember the V in your boots?' he used to say. 'It almost lost us the war in South Africa, and certainly prolonged the war for two years.' And I am not sure that he was altogether wrong, for we attended too much to little things before 1899 and too little to things that mattered.

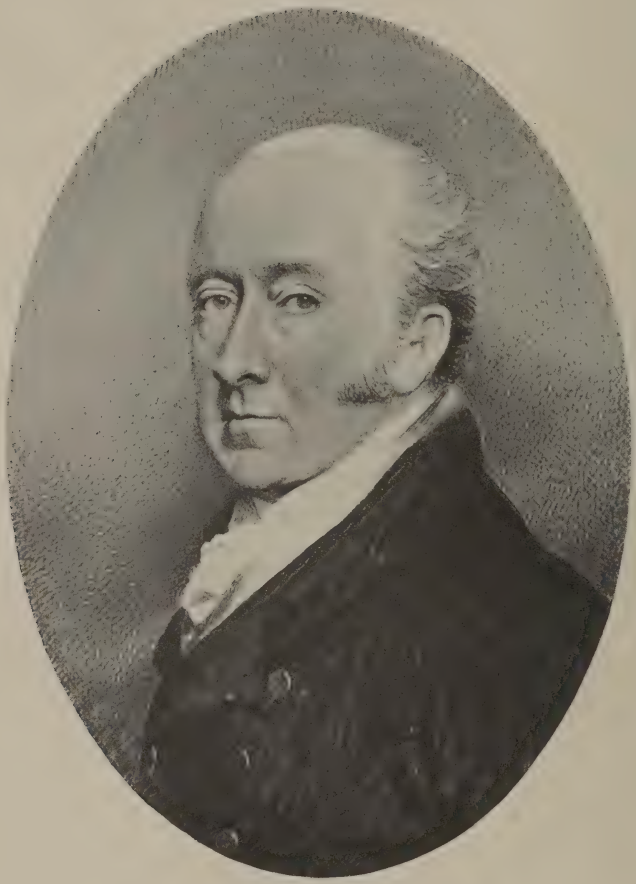
It was at the close of the New Forest manœuvres that the good old Duke of Cambridge took an informal

farewell of the army. I had known him from my youth by sight because he was a constant visitor to the house next to ours in Chesham Street, and his phaeton, with a beautiful pair of horses, used to stand outside waiting for him for hours at a time. He was identified with all the life of the army in the middle and late Victorian epoch, and as he was not fond of change he appealed to the conservative instincts of the army. He had a quick eye for troops and manœuvres, and was particular about dress and equipment. He was constantly present at our peace manœuvres and parades, and his arrival, surrounded as he usually was by all the great officers of the Headquarters Staff in London, came to mean a good deal to us all. The army seemed to be, and indeed was, commanded ; and from a certain point of view I do not think that any of the modern changes have quite made up for the absence at the head of the army of a great and independent Royal Prince, accounted by us all our Chief and our friend as well as a permanent institution. At the close of the manœuvres we were all drawn up upon rising ground, just as we stood after an assault, and the word was passed round that the Duke was coming. As he came into sight, all the head-dresses were off in a flash and on the soldiers' rifles, and thunderous cheers, quite unpremeditated and from the heart, came from the line, and were renewed again and again as the old Duke passed slowly in front of us and then out of sight. It was a great farewell, all the greater because it was totally unrehearsed, and the old Chief must have deeply appreciated it.

I joined the staff of H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught for a time, until my battalion proceeded to Ireland, and served in the Adjutant-General's branch at the

Headquarters office under Colonel, afterward Sir Charles Douglas, and Chief of the General Staff when the Great War broke out, a man for whose honesty, competence, and encyclopædic knowledge of regulations, I always entertained a profound respect. The Duke of Connaught was extraordinarily popular at Aldershot, as indeed he has been wherever his lot has been cast. He would have made an ideal successor to the old Duke of Cambridge, for he had a vast knowledge of the army and its officers and was thoroughly identified with them and their interests. He was a fine horseman, and spent long hours in the saddle, riding round the lines and training grounds, and following everything that went on with the closest attention.

We were going to hold manœuvres at Frensham, and the staff officer who was preparing them kept all the arrangements in his own hands and would not allow Douglas or me, who were both much junior to him, to have anything to do with them. A fortnight before the date fixed for the manœuvres, this staff officer staggered into the room where Douglas and I sat, holding his head in his hands and saying, 'My God, my God, I'm a ruined man!' 'What's the matter?' asked Douglas sharply, without getting up. Then it came out that all the arrangements had broken down hopelessly—ground, water, food, everything—and that the poor staff officer was sure that the Duke would be involved, and that he himself would be cashiered. 'What on earth,' he inquired plaintively, 'am I to do?' Charles Douglas looked at him sternly and replied, 'There's only one thing for you to do. You go sick, and à Court and I will manage the manœuvres.' The staff officer recovered himself, turned on his heel, went out, and followed Douglas's advice. The



Sir William À Court, Bart.,
Afterwards 1st Lord Heytesbury.

(*From a miniature.*)

manœuvres duly took place and were a complete success, for which the staff officer who had the panic gained the entire credit. He had returned to duty when everything was prepared for him, and I feel sure that neither Douglas nor I ever gave away the truth.

I rejoined the 4th Battalion in Dublin a little later, and we were quartered at Portobello Barracks. Here we went through the usual round of training men up to a pitch of perfection, and then of losing them when the drafts went abroad, than which there is no greater misery that I know for a keen soldier. About this time Sir Alfred, afterwards Lord Milner, asked the War Office to nominate a Military Secretary to accompany him to South Africa, and they nominated me. I have often wondered whether things would have been just the same had I gone out to find, as I should have done, my old chief, Sir William Butler, at the Cape. I suppose they would. Anyhow, Harry Rawlinson and I lunched together one day, and after examining the whole situation decided that we would both endeavour to get to Egypt in order to take part in the campaign in the Sudan, which seemed to us to be drawing towards a decisive stage, and to be likely to come on before the inevitable row in South Africa. Whether we worked the oracles or not I cannot remember, but in any case I went out to Egypt in August 1897 as D.A.A.G. on Sir Francis's, afterwards Lord Grenfell's staff at Cairo, and Rawly came out later and managed to get on to Kitchener's staff, to which staff I was also translated before the Atbara campaign began. We were the only two British officers not belonging to the Egyptian Army with Kitchener, and we had both succeeded in our scheme of seeing all the fun of the fair in the Sudan. For a little luncheon plot it was quite a good result.

I hope that I have not conveyed the impression that I was always working and never amusing myself in my days of peace soldiering. No one believed more than I did that 'all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.' I took leave whenever I could get it, and shared in all the sports and amusements of the times. I took teams to play cricket at country houses, and once took a team of officers of the 3rd Battalion Rifle Brigade to play Mitchell's House at Eton at football, a game which we won in the last ten minutes after being run off our feet by the boys in the earlier part of the game. I was a regular visitor at certain pleasant shooting parties in England and Scotland, and I played whist up to all hours in the mornings when I could get a rubber. I was a fairly regular attendant at all the big race-meetings. I generally had some racing ponies which afforded me amusement and exercise to train, and once I won three races in one day. The two best ponies I had were a little brown thoroughbred mare called Twinkling Star, on which I won the open race at Aldershot, and a bay mare which had been Fred Archer's hack at Newmarket, and was by Blue Gown, dam by Macaroni, two Derby winners. This mare could beat anything that I ever met at five furlongs, but the mile was just out of her distance. So I used to make matches with her, and never lost one. When she was in a mile race I used to make the running at a terrific pace, and to try and cut all the others down.

When I was at the Intelligence Division I could no longer train, so I kept a few horses at Gatland's stable at Alfriston, near Lewes, and used to go down there with Roddy Owen, the famous soldier cross-country rider, spend the night, ride gallops at daybreak, and be back in time for work, though how we did it in those

days without motor cars I cannot think. The Sussex Downs were delightful in the early mornings, and Gatland had a regular steeplechase course fixed up. The best horse I owned was Partisan, who won races for me on the flat, over hurdles, and over a country. He was a big, dark brown or black horse, and he could stay for ever, but very few jockeys except Sensier could ever extend him. I bought him to win the Grand Military, but ran second in a good field of horses, giving the winner two stone and being beaten only half a length. That mighty chaser and glorious jumper Why Not was in the race and fell. Another beautiful horse I owned was Bellman, a chestnut horse with a wonderful stride and a lovely jumper. I won two races with him, but then he threw out a thorough-pin, and we could never get him round, or I think that I should have won the Grand Military with him. I gave Toynbee of East Acton £500 for him untried, and Toynbee offered me £1000 to get him back after my first win with him. The most disappointing horse I ever owned was Whiskeroso, a perfect hurdle racer, who had always won his race at the last hurdle and then would never finish. A clever stable thought that they knew more than I did about him, and poor Bald of the 42nd tossed me whether he should give me £200 or £400 for him. I won. The new stable tried him at home to be an absolute certainty, but sure enough the horse played them the same trick that he had often played me, and let them in for a heavy loss.

I remember Roddy Owen's win on Father O'Flynn, because we were walking together the morning that the weights were out for the Grand National, and I asked him what he was going to ride. He said that it was the most extraordinary thing, but he had been offered the

mount upon every horse in the race. I said 'What are you going to ride?' He replied, 'I am going to ride Father O'Flynn, and I am going to win this year's Grand National.' 'But,' I objected, 'the horse is in at 10.7 and you can't ride less than 11.7.' Roddy solemnly repeated his previous remark. Father O'Flynn was then at 66 to 1. Roddy went off to the coast, lived on apples, and spent all his days in walking on the beach and sands to get his weight down, and when the day came I think he only had to declare two or three pounds over weight. He won easily, but as he was ever so far in front, and was still riding 'The Father' hard as he passed the post, some of the crowd jeered, and when Roddy came in I asked why he won by such a distance. His answer was that if the 'little devil' had heard the rattle of the horse's hoofs behind him he would have stopped dead, and that he knew this and the crowd did not. Roddy Owen was a brilliant horseman. Whether he or Colonel Brocklehurst had the most beautiful seat on a horse I could never decide, but both were perfection. Roddy, having achieved the triumph which he had desired as the crown of his racing career, took to soldiering seriously, and would, I am sure, have become a fine column commander in South Africa. His untimely death in the Sudan was a great grief to me. Men like Roddy Owen, Bimbash Stewart, and Herbert Magniac are among those who can never be replaced.

Here I may place a letter from the Kaiser to my uncle. The last touch is a little prophetic and shows that Berlin knew what was in store for us later at Fashoda:—

'NEUES PALAIS, POTSDAM, 11.1.98.

'DEAR SIR EDWARD,—Your kind letter reached me all right and the Palace did not come down about my

ears, and the courtiers did not shake in their shoes and the guards did not sound "alarums"! Your scruples are quite unnecessary! A letter from you is always a treat for me. For it is sure to be full of interesting views on the one matter which engrosses both our thoughts, and that is the "ship"! From your lines I fancy I feel the fresh breeze from Brighton blowing into my face and fancy I feel the bracing effects of the briny air! Please do not stop your kind correspondence for you will ever find a happy and enthusiastic listener.

'It is a queer coincidence that I got your ideas about fast sailing fore and aft vessels today together with the telegram announcing the arrival of one of the finest schooners afloat which was built in America and now belongs to my wife. The *Yampa* has often crossed the Atlantic, and in her last cruise managed to cover the distance between America and England in a fortnight under ordinary cruising canvas; once doing nearly 300 miles in 24 hours. She is a perfect seaboat and also fast enough to have some racing amusement out of her. Her dimensions roughly are: Length 135 feet, Breadth 27 ft., Depth 14 ft., and she lays on the water like a swan, showing a perfect water line, running from a long projecting stern, to a lovely clipper-shaped overhanging bow. These dimensions would give a relation of 1:5; length against breadth, as a good base for high speed in sailing in the breeze you indicate. If you want to have an approximate idea of what the dimension of your proposed large 6-masted schooners of 10,000 tons ought to be; treble the breadth of the *Yampa*, multiplicate with 5, and you will find a vessel of length 405 feet, breadth 87 feet according to the rule of relation 1:5, why should she

not be able to do 18-20 knots in a rattling breeze? The large 6-masted frigate like yarded clippers that go from Hamburg to Chile often do an *average* of 15-16 knots for weeks! The above figures would give you a seaworthy and stabile boat, perhaps her lines could be made yet finer in reducing her beam! Or in taking another relation as for instance 1:7. I hope the Heligoland Cup will be a success, and that we shall have many entries and good weather as well as the pleasure of your presence. Last time your countrymen seemed to enjoy themselves very much at Kiel, as also did their men, who for the first time in their lives were moored in waters which know of no tides! The astonishment and joy of these brave tars was highly amusing to see!

'The political outlook is on the whole not bad; only your "Brummagem Joe" seems to take up "little wars" by the dozen, and I venture to think that Britannia has quite enough on her hands with the utterly useless Afridi war, which has not the effect expected and a new Expedition to the Sudan, where she well may suddenly meet beside the Mahdi, Menelik of Abissinian "connaissance" and France for ought that I know! Perhaps that your Press then suddenly will find out that after all the German Emperor is worth while thinking of?! Quien sabé?

'Now, good-bye, best compliments to your ladies from your most shiploving disciple,

'WILLIAM, I.R.'

CHAPTER VIII

THE ATBARA CAMPAIGN

BEFORE I left London I went to thank Lord Wolseley for my appointment. He had been made Commander-in-Chief in succession to the old Duke, but, to my great regret, had not been able to surround himself with a General Staff, and the old functions of the chief officers at Army Headquarters remained intact. From this cause the tenure of the Command-in-Chief by Lord Wolseley first, and by Lord Roberts afterwards, was not all the success that it ought to have been, and failed to produce the reforms which were very badly needed.

Lord Wolseley ordered me to keep him informed of events in Egypt and the Sudan, and consequently, during my service in these countries, I wrote regularly to his Military Secretary, Lord Erroll, or to my old friends of the Intelligence Department, to keep them *au courant* with events so far as I knew them. This was not by any means a work of supererogation. Although my chief, Sir Francis Grenfell, was an old Sirdar of the Egyptian Army, had led it to victory in the field at Toski, and enjoyed a great and well-deserved popularity in Egypt, there was very little touch between the Egyptian Army and us of the Army of Occupation, and still less between the Egyptian Army and Army Headquarters in London. Egypt was under the Foreign Office, and Lord Cromer was Agent and Consul-General in Egypt and had no dealings with

the War Office, or at least very few. The Egyptian Army Budget was Cromer's affair, and, as he who pays the piper has the prescriptive right of calling the tune, Cromer did pretty well as he pleased, and the Sirdar and the Egyptian War Office looked to him as their political and administrative chief. The Egyptian Army had its own agent in London to procure arms and munitions ; it turned out most of its equipment at the Cairo arsenal, where 'Monkey' Gordon, Charles Gordon's nephew, who was a genius, had complete control, and it provided its own supplies, even soap, thanks to the good administrative capacity of Colonel Rogers, who was in charge of this branch of the army. Hacket Pain was an excellent Adjutant-General at the Egyptian War Office, and to these few men, subject to the direction of Kitchener and to the financial control of Cromer, was due the very efficient and yet extraordinarily economical administration of the Egyptian Army. This army itself daily improved, thanks to the competence of the officers and N.C.O.'s, who all worked hard.

But the War Office knew little about these matters, and even when the last phases of the reconquest of the Sudan began they had no responsibility and issued no orders. The Headquarters of the Army of Occupation in Cairo were in a similar position, and the Egyptian Army naturally called us 'The army of no occupation,' at all events until they needed us, when they sang a different tune. There was consequently an unfortunate want of touch between Egypt and the War Office, and my endeavour was to keep the War Office informed of what was going on, as well as I could. The Agency and the Egyptian Army combined to keep clear of War Office control and to maintain the conduct of affairs

in their own hands and under their own men. I do not say that they were wrong. I am only stating the facts.

The British Army, if army it can be called, which we maintained in Egypt at this time was a most diminutive one, namely, four or five white battalions, the 21st Lancers, some mounted infantry, and two or three batteries. It was about enough to hold the Cairo citadel and to police the towns of Cairo and Alexandria, but for all other purposes it was entirely inadequate. Sir Francis Grenfell's object was to keep this little army fit, and to train it for the special purpose of fighting dervishes. The desert round Cairo was an admirable manœuvre ground for this purpose, and, in default of real dervishes, we used the 21st Lancers to act as dervishes and to attack the column or square of infantry and guns by surprise on the march. This they did with great ingenuity and dash, and our little force, which subsequently formed the 1st British Brigade in the Sudan, became most supple, efficient, and fit. We did much musketry and field firing, and the early part of the cold season of 1897-98 passed in this manner. Colonel Harry Cooper was Grenfell's Chief Staff Officer, and was an excellent chief to me. He was quite indefatigable, and his knowledge of military affairs was very great. There were other good men upon the Staff, Hope and Morgan, for instance, and we all got on very well together and were a very happy family, while Sir Francis and Lady Grenfell were always kindness itself and were immensely popular with us all. We managed to mount most of the Lancers on Syrian Arabs whose export was nominally forbidden by the Turks, so the price of each horse was increased by about £4 to pay the fee of the Turkish custom-house people before they would let the horses pass. We had an excellent veteri-

nary officer in Blenkinsop, who carried out this work very well, and the 21st were beautifully mounted for desert warfare when they left for the front.

One curious incident I must recall before plunging into the Sudan story. One day our mounted infantry under Hore were out marching, and on passing the village of Shubra they were stoned by the natives. For some reason which I forget, Hore did not retaliate on the spot, but came in and reported his treatment, which filled me with wrath. Cromer was away, and Rennell Rodd, together with General Henderson from Alexandria, who was acting for Sir F. Grenfell, had to decide what to do. It was settled to surround the village with troops and to seize the culprits, so one misty dawn this was duly done, to the immense surprise of the natives, and the chief offenders were tried for an offence against the Army of Occupation and sentenced to long terms of penal servitude. Rodd managed this little matter with firmness, and it had an excellent effect. We were never bothered again by any incident of the sort.

When I reached Cairo in August 1897 the reconquest of the Sudan was approaching a critical stage. The evacuation of the Sudan, after the failure to relieve Gordon, had been completed in 1885, but all we soldiers and most public opinion at home were bent on reconquest. The defeat of the dervishes near Suakin in December 1888 had relieved the local pressure on this side, and Wad el Nejumi's defeat by Grenfell at Toski in August 1889 had checked the aggressive action of the enemy in the Nile Valley. The defeat of Osman Digna near Tokar in February 1891 enabled this province to be reoccupied, and did something to restore confidence in the Eastern Sudan. We had acquired a settled

frontier of a kind, and we could defend it with forces of no great importance, but, of course, the main business of the reconquest was still in front of us, and neither the Khalifa at Omdurman, nor some of his adherents and supporters, had been seriously tackled. Lord Cromer was not the initiator of the reconquest which began with the advance to Dongola in 1896. He had expected and desired a longer period to elapse before the business was taken in hand, and he once told me in Cairo that he had wished the progress in Egypt to make more marked strides before the recovery of the Sudan was attempted. Political circumstances at home forced his hand. The Italians were defeated by the Abyssinians at Adua in March 1896, and the appeal to us by the Italian Ambassador for assistance was met, so we heard, by Mr. Chamberlain's suggestion to the Cabinet—'Let 's go to Dongola,' a suggestion which found ready acceptance in spite of the fact that Cromer thought the decision premature.

At the time of this decision Sarras was the terminus of the railway southward from Wadi Halfa, and as the navigation of the river was impeded by rapids it was determined to push on the railway which was eventually to terminate at Kerma close to Dongola as a temporary measure. After combats at Firket and Hafir, and after the overcoming of serious difficulties owing to cholera and storms, Dongola was occupied on September 23, and a few days later the historic town of Merowi at the foot of the Fourth Cataract was taken. Then came the important decision to construct a railway across the desert from Wadi Halfa to Abu Hamed, an enterprise which made the fame of Percy Girouard and his able young assistants, and when this railway was about two-thirds of the way across the desert Kitchener deter-

mined to occupy Abu Hamed from Merowi, and after a sharp fight General Hunter carried out the plan with entire success. Berber, having been evacuated by the dervishes, was occupied by the Egyptian Army at the end of August 1897, and the continuation of the railway from Abu Hamed to Berber was at once taken in hand. In December Kassala was occupied by an Egyptian force under Colonel Parsons, and the chessboard was now set out for the decisive operations.

We did not know at that time that strategy was an art of which the Khalifa and his fighting Emirs did not know the rudiments, and while Lord Cromer was anxious I certainly thought that the wide dispersion of Kitchener's forces was a trifle ambitious, and offered much temptation to the Khalifa could he avail himself of his opportunity. Berber, well within striking distance of the Dervish army, 10,000 strong, under Mahmud at Metemma, was held in August by no more than 350 men, and Osman Digna at Adarama was not to be forgotten. But the Khalifa Abdullahi, doomed by destiny to defeat, refused permission to Mahmud to advance, and by October 11 Berber was held by five battalions, while Dakhila, at the confluence of the Atbara and the Nile, was occupied soon afterwards and made strong. Colin Keppel and David Beatty of the Navy, with their little gunboats the *Zafir* and *Fateh*, kept Mahmud busy at Metemma, and made him show all his forces, while they alarmed the enemy so much that Osman Digna with 2000 Hadendoa joined him at Shendy.

On January 1, 1898, Hunter sent news from the front to Kitchener confirming the probability of a Dervish advance, and Kitchener, in repeating the news to Cromer, suggested that British troops should be sent to Abu

Hamed, and that reinforcements should also be sent to Egypt. Four of our battalions from Egypt were duly sent up under the command of Major-General Gatacre, and Kitchener at the same time notified that for the final advance he would need a second British brigade, a regiment of cavalry, and a British field battery. By the beginning of March, one British and two Egyptian brigades, with a regiment of Egyptian cavalry, 24 field and horse artillery guns and 12 Maxims were assembled between Berber and the Atbara fort, and the move was not premature, for in February Mahmud, with 12,000 men, had crossed to the right bank of the Nile from Metemma and threatened trouble.

Sir Francis Grenfell had gone up the river in February 1898 to inspect, and had taken me with him. On reaching Wadi Halfa we separated, and while he returned to Cairo I went on to join Kitchener's staff at his invitation. I crossed the desert to Abu Hamed by the new railway, and thence on by it to Bashtinab, whence I rode on to Abadia, Berber, and Kanur, turning the Fifth Cataract, and finding Gatacre's brigade in a confined camp on the river at Dabeika. They were all very fit, and the same could be said for the Egyptian Army which I found at Berber where I joined Kitchener on March 4. What followed I may give by reproducing a letter which I wrote to Major Fairholme of the Intelligence Division while the events were fresh in my memory, and there is only one point to be added, namely that we were acting at low Nile, six months before the rise of the river could give us due facilities for river transport, and that consequently our operations were defensive in general character.

'BASHTINAB, *April* 13/98.

'MY DEAR FAIRHOLME,—By a combination of luck and good management I joined the Sirdar's Staff at Berber on March 4, and as I have been almost continually with him since active operations began, I am sending you a few notes on events in order that you may be able to fill up the gaps in official and other information.

'Between the 5th and the 12th I visited all the quarters occupied by the army, and accompanied the gunboats under Colin Keppel and David Beatty in reconnaissances as far as Shendy. At this period, as you will remember, we were daily expecting to hear of Mahmud's advance, and on the 6th and 7th we tackled all the dervish parties hanging about along the river and accounted for a good many of them; at Shendy in particular we caught some of Osman Digna's cavalry watering, and gave them an unpleasant five minutes with the Maxims. The same day, as we were passing close under a high bank, a volley was fired at us from the bush at close range, about twenty-five yards. Keppel and I were at breakfast on deck, and we were lucky to get off without damage. At Shebaliya Island a look-out was formed which proved of great use to our Intelligence Department. From this point a good view is obtained of the road from Shendy to Aliab, and every day a careful record was made of the numbers passing. Although some two thousand or three thousand men had been seen going north in small parties up to the 8th, there was no sign of a serious movement, and the march of the parties seen was very deliberate.

'On the 12th, after my return to Berber, the enemy's advance began, and every movement was constantly

reported by gunboats, deserters, and spies. The actual numbers which left Shendy were 18,900, including 4000 cavalry. These figures were obtained from Mahmud's *Kateb*, who was subsequently taken in the operations at Shendy, and their accuracy was admitted by Mahmud after his capture. It is true that a number deserted later, but Mahmud gave his force at the battle as 14,000 infantry and 4000 cavalry, and, liar though Mahmud is, I do not think these figures much over the mark, although part of the cavalry were often absent foraging, and we certainly never saw more than two thousand horsemen at one time. The gunboats engaged the enemy during his advance, but were not able—even if it had been wanted—to check the movement, owing to the lowness of the river. When I was on board, the top of the banks was thirty feet above the water, and as our two Maxims, rigged up on temporary wooden platforms above the upper battery, only gave us a command of thirty-four feet we could not do much, especially bearing in mind the fact that the ground falls away from the banks inland, giving good cover, and that the bush is thick along the river.

'Scattered over five miles of the river, the dervishes could really water when they liked, and in consequence they reached Aliab about the 17th, and thence struck across to the Atbara, where they took up a position on the right bank in the Nakheila district. Mahmud, as you probably know, wished to advance along the Nile and attack our Atbara Fort (Dakhila). Osman Digna, on the other hand, advised the other course, holding out prospects of obtaining supplies from Adarama and from various caches on the Atbara—promises which remained unfulfilled except as regards Osman Digna's own men. To meet either contingency, and to check-

mate an attack on Dakhila, Berber, or any intermediate post on the Nile, the Sirdar concentrated three brigades at Kanur, leaving the fourth at Dakhila in the strong fort at the junction of the Nile and the Atbara.

'The force was now organised as follows :—

Gatacre's Brigade—Snow, S.O.

1st Lincoln (Verner).
1st R. Warwickshire (Quayle-Jones), 6 companies only.
1st Camerons (Money).
1st Seaforths (Murray).

(The latter regiment arrived on March 16.)

Maxim Batteries (Hunter-Blair).

Macdonald's Brigade—Keith-Falconer, S.O.

2nd (Pink) Egyptians.
9th (Walter) Sudanese.
10th (Nason) Sudanese.
11th (Jackson) Sudanese.

Maxwell's Brigade—Maxse, S.O.

8th (Kolussi) Egyptians.
12th (Townshend) Sudanese
13th (Collinson) Sudanese.
14th (Shekleton) Sudanese.

Lewis's Brigade.

3rd (Sillem) Egyptians.
4th (Sparkes) Egyptians.
7th (Fathi) Egyptians.
15th (Hickman) Egyptians.

Also eight squadrons of cavalry under Broadwood and two companies camel corps under King.

'*Artillery:* Horse Battery (Young), 7.5 c. Krupp; No. 2 Field Battery (Peake), 6 cm. Krupp; No. 4

Field Battery (Lawrie); No. 5 (de Rougemont), Maxim-Nordenfeldt, 12½ pr. The two latter had each two Maxims on galloping carriages, six horses per gun.

'Colonel Long commanded the artillery; in the various drills and manœuvres at Kanur the batteries were attached to the brigades. These manœuvres were of the greatest use in making brigades and regiments handy and in accustoming all to know their places. We were all rather at sea the first day, but the troops rapidly picked up the work until they became very steady and flexible, able to advance on a broad front and change direction with great precision, and to form up rapidly to meet flank or enveloping attacks. As we used nearly all the formations, practised beforehand, in the battle, it will be sufficient if I give you the details presently.

'In common with many other people I wondered how the Sirdar would frame as a leader of troops in these early Victorian formations which we were forced to adopt to meet the dervish tactics. I can only say that I consider the Sirdar is as good in the field as he is in administration, head and shoulders above all his subordinates here, and that the formations finally adopted by him and employed in the fight were the best to meet the new fire tactics of the enemy and to ward off the enveloping attacks by spearmen and cavalry which he had reason to expect if the enemy met us in the open field. Before we left Kanur the machine went quite smoothly, no fuss, no worry, no confusion, and the meanest intelligence could not fail to see that we had a real professional army, splendid in physique, steady, well disciplined, and well found. Towards this efficiency the camel *hamla*, under Colonel Walter Kitchener, contributed not a little. Working

in sections, each with its brigade when in the field, the transport corps proved to be a model : always well closed up and moving with great regularity, the camels were no incubus at all, and their drill was excellent. On the march and in bivouac the transport was equally efficient, the camels never overladen, always well fed and cared for, and without this the army could never have left the Nile and remained so long at a distance from its regular line of communications.

'When it became clear that the whole dervish force from Shendy had undoubtedly crossed into the Atbara Valley, and when daily reconnaissances found only small parties at and to the south of Ed Damer, the Sirdar had to make a decision. Several courses were open to Mahmud : (1) he might advance down the Atbara and attack Dakhila, (2) or march directly on Berber by the desert in accordance with the Khalifa's orders, (3) or remain quiescent with his main force and raid our communications with his cavalry. In order to meet *all* eventualities the Sirdar decided to march to Ras el Hudi with his whole force, leaving only one battalion at Dakhila (15th) and one at Berber (1st).

'On the 20th the army marched to Hudi from Kanur across the desert in a severe dust storm. The three brigades marched in echelon of brigade squares from the right at 300-400 yards' distance, Gatacre leading, and on the morning of the 21st marched on to Ras el Hudi, thirteen miles from Dakhila. This movement exposed at once the utterly false position of the dervish army and reduced it to impotence. It could not retire without causing the ruin of the prestige of the leaders and of all the many important Emirs who accompanied them. In case an attack on Dakhila was persisted in, the army, now joined by three battalions of Lewis's

brigade, stood across its path. It could not march on Berber without making a long detour in the desert, since Ras el Hudi was on the direct road to Berber; even if the desert march were attempted it was clear that the Sirdar could fall on the flank and rear of the army and overwhelm it. Even the numerous Baggara horsemen were checkmated, and during the long wait before the final action we never lost a single man or animal on our line of communications.

'It may be asked at home, Why did we wait so long before attacking? To reply to this fully would require a very careful analysis of the information as it came to hand from day to day, and also copies of confidential telegrams which passed between Lord Cromer and the Sirdar. Shortly, however, we at first thought that the dervish position was all well within the bush area, which is very thick and broad higher up the Atbara and in parts almost impenetrable; secondly, it was believed that the enemy had no food and the condition of the first deserters seemed to prove it; we were therefore justified in hoping the enemy might be forced to attack, or at least that we lost nothing by delay while the enemy became constantly weaker.

'During the delay at Ras el Hudi the usual course was for one or two squadrons to go out at 4.30 A.M. and get in touch with the dervish scouts, while one or two battalions supported them at Khor Abadar, the native levies and camel corps ranging the desert flanks on each bank of the river. On March 21 a small party of our cavalry were surprised in the bush and lost seven killed and eight wounded; the remainder behaved steadily and cleared out the enemy, killing a good many, and bringing in some dervish horses. On the 22nd one squadron and the 13th Sudanese were employed at this

work when they were attacked by some five hundred cavalry. The 13th formed square, the squadron taking refuge inside, and kept the horsemen at bay with ease by infantry and Maxim fire. A report reached camp that a large body of infantry was advancing, consequently the whole force moved out and advanced up the river in echelon of brigades from the centre, Macdonald in the bush, Gatacre centre, Maxwell left, and Lewis in rear. After we had advanced a few miles the report turned out to be false, and all returned to bivouac, without any loss.

'On the 26th Hickman and the 15th battalion and 150 Jaalin went up to Shendy with the three gunboats, landed three miles south of the town, and defeated 700 men left with the women at Hosh ben Nagi; the Jaalin killed 150 men in the pursuit, and some five hundred women were brought away. The Shendy forts were destroyed and all existing supplies were captured. I had hoped, in suggesting this enterprise, that the blow would help to make Mahmud move, by checking his supply, but the main effect was to increase the correspondence between the Khalifa and his lieutenant, details of which were duly supplied to us.

'On the 30th a reconnaissance of the dervish position took place by Hunter and Broadwood with seven squadrons of cavalry, the horse battery, and four Maxims. The enemy apparently expected that our whole force was about to attack. He consequently allowed Hunter, Broadwood, Haig, and Tullibardine to come within 300 yards, and to have a good look at the position: Young fired a few rounds, but the dervishes did not reply. Hunter was able to see the *zariba* and palisades and several lines of trenches, and he also brought back the very important news that the desert

side of the *dem* was open and clear of bush. On the afternoon of April 3 the final decision was arrived at to attack the enemy, as it was evident that Mahmud would not attack us, and prisoners captured appeared to show that there was less want in the enemy's camp than had been reported by deserters. The Sirdar had given Mahmud every chance to attack, and though Kitchener was unwilling to incur the losses which he knew would be inevitable in storming entrenchments held by a numerous and brave enemy, he felt, as all of us did, the need for action.

'On the 4th the force moved out at 5 A.M. to Abadar, the brigades bivouacking, Macdonald's in front up stream, then Gatacre, Lewis, and Maxwell in the order named. This night a party of dervishes held up the convoy for Dakhila; the latter formed square, and two companies camel corps went out and cleared off the enemy. On the 5th Hunter started at 5 A.M. with the same force as before to take a further survey of the dervish *dem*, and, if possible, to make out where the flanks rested. The dervishes gave this force a bad time; their cavalry, 1500 strong, came out right and left in small parties, and gradually surrounded the troops; infantry also came out of the *dem* with their flags and advanced rapidly. Hunter retired slowly, greatly hampered by the dust, which prevented a clear view of the field. The Baggara came very close, often threatening an attack, but never charging home. They were tackled by single squadrons in two charges by Persse and Le Gallais—in one of which Persse was wounded—and severely handled, but the Maxim practically saved the situation as the horsemen could never face them, and their gatherings broke up at once directly fire was opened on them. Our loss this day was

six killed and ten wounded, that of the enemy is not known, but was said to have been heavy and the loss fell entirely on the Baggara.

'On the 6th we marched at 4 A.M. to Umdabia, and at 11 A.M. Hunter and I went on to within striking distance of the *dem* to select a jumping-off place for the night march preceding the attack. We took one squadron and the 11th, and kept inside the edge of the bush. Pushing back the dervish cavalry posts, we found a good bivouac on the edge of the desert at Mutrus within 1100 yards of the river. Hunter and I went on a bit farther in hopes we might get the Baggara out under fire of our 11th and the two Maxims which had been placed in ambuscade, but they seemed shy after their last experience. This day was the hottest we have had, and the blacks were fairly knocked out by the sun, and many dropped and had to be carried. They complained bitterly that they had not been told of the reconnaissance after their morning march, and had filled themselves up with water before they paraded.

'On the 7th we started at 5.30 P.M. for the Mutrus bivouac, arriving 7.15 P.M. We formed up in mass of brigade squares, Gatacre in front, then Macdonald, Maxwell, and Lewis, in the order named, the guns inside the squares; the cavalry were left at Umdabia with orders to join us during the night.

'*April* 8, *Good Friday, Battle of the Atbara.*

'We left Mutrus bivouac at 1.5 A.M. on a bearing of 75 degrees in mass of brigade squares at a distance of about 150 yards. This movement was made in perfect silence and order; there was a full moon on the 7th and the light was good. At 2.47 A.M. we saw the dervish

fires, and at 3.20 A.M. hit off the wheel tracks made by Hunter's reconnaissance, and changed direction in accordance with orders to move straight on the *dem* from the desert side. A halt now took place till 4.30 A.M., when line was formed, and the advance continued at 5.12 A.M., we being then about two miles from the position. Our line was about 1500 yards long; the British on the left, with the Warwicks in column on the left, the Lincolns next on their right, then Seaforths, and then Camerons, each of the last three with six companies in first line and two close behind in support. The Egyptian brigades, all six-company regiments, had four companies in line, two in support, a battalion in reserve in the centre brigade, and one in column on the right in the right brigade. Macdonald was next to the British on their right, and Maxwell on the right again. Lewis's brigade kept in square in rear of the British right, and the cavalry, which were now up, were on our extreme left.

'This formation was the one in which the Sirdar had decided to meet a dervish attack should the enemy leave the *dem*, and we had constantly practised it. As the day dawned, the dervish horsemen were seen flying about in front, and after a little time the *dem* came in view, the parapets crowded with men who must have watched the imposing sight of our long line with uncomfortable feelings. Our advance continued with great precision until we were within 600 yards of the *zariba*. Then the line was halted and the whole of our artillery came out about 30 yards in front of the line and opened fire at 6.16 A.M.

'Our whole line stood with ordered arms watching the spectacle which followed, the Sirdar and Staff being on the left of the line of guns. At the first gun every dervish disappeared into the trenches, while a party of

some fifty horsemen rode slowly out of the *dem* towards the enemy's right. I think it probable they were Osman Digna and his particular friends, as they came out from the section of the *dem* where his men were posted. Colonel Long was given an absolutely free hand in his work: he began ranging deliberately, and gradually the fire grew hotter and hotter. The shells burst beautifully, and after a quarter of an hour the straw *tukls* in the *dem* were on fire in many places. Not a dervish showed up and not a rifle shot was fired in return; the enemy lay close and reserved his fire, only a few of his guns occasionally sending a futile shell. The gun detachments were all Arabs and were found dead round their pieces; probably this is the reason why no guns fired during the infantry assault, all the gunners having been disposed of by Long. Beatty, R.N., with his rockets opened on the left and was then moved to the right of the guns, putting most of his projectiles well among the enemy.

'As it was now clear that the dervishes would await our assault, the brigades received orders to form up for the purpose, and the enemy, mistaking this for the beginning of the attack, opened fire from the N.W. corner of the *dem*. The Egyptian brigades altered their formation scarcely at all, but in Gatacre's brigade the Cameron Highlanders formed the front line and the Seaforths and Lincolns were in column behind them, with the Warwicks still in column guarding the left. Each brigadier was pointed out his front of attack, and ordered to bring his brigade directly opposite his sector. Gatacre moved his brigade some 200 yards to his left; this left a wide gap between Gatacre and Macdonald, so the Sirdar sent me to bring him in, while Macdonald and Maxwell closed to their left a little, the

line being slightly concave towards the enemy. By this time it was 7.30 A.M. We had fired fifty-six rounds per gun, and the *dem* was simply steaming from the severe hammering it had been getting, and smoke was rising and *tukls* blazing in all directions. At 7.40 the order was given to the infantry to advance and prepare for the assault by a heavy fire, but not to assault until the advance sounded a second time. It was a truly magnificent sight as the twelve battalions swept forward in perfect order and beautiful alignment to within 300 yards of the *zariba*, where steady volley firing was opened, gradually increasing in intensity. In a moment the parapets were lined by the enemy and a heavy fire was directed upon our men. The Remington is a good weapon at close quarters and causes severe wounds: the enemy was under cover, and our men in the open, where there was no cover for a mouse. The duel continued for twelve minutes, and it was at this time that the Camerons suffered so severely. At 7.52 the advance sounded again, and the whole line swept down upon the *zariba*, crashed through it and over the low palisades, shooting and bayoneting every soul who remained in the front trenches. The dervishes stood up and fought like men, but they could not stand the sight of the cold steel in their faces, and at a few paces' distance broke and fled, carrying with them most of the spearmen in the trenches behind. There were, however, many trenches in rear still held, while from every unburnt *tukl* the black *Jehadia* poured a heavy fire, often waiting till our front line had passed and then firing at their backs.

'Gatacre's brigade had the following orders: The Camerons were to advance, firing without halting, and pull away the *zariba*, making gaps for the three other

regiments, which were to deploy, the Seaforths outwards and the Lincolns to the right, the Warwicks guarding the left, while the Camerons reformed in column as a reserve. Most of us thought that the Camerons would never let the Seaforths through and that deploying inside the position would be difficult. As a matter of fact, the Camerons, finding the *zariba* no great obstacle, dashed on, only two companies reforming : the Seaforths became mixed up with them, and only two companies of the Lincolns found room to deploy. No great harm was done. By this time the roll of independent firing had become deafening and drowned the pipes, whistles, and bands ; the whole line pressed on, the black brigades well in hand and firing as fast as they could load, clearing trench after trench and using the bayonet freely. The Sirdar remained in front of Lewis's brigade, of which the 7th Battalion kept the high ground and protected the *hamla*, while the 3rd and 4th protected the British left.

'Broadwood, with the cavalry, was three-quarters of a mile away on high ground to our left. The dervish horsemen faced him and threatened to charge, but scattered in the bush when the Maxims opened. Part now tried to charge the Warwicks, but the latter regiment, which was very steady throughout, formed up three companies to the left and drove them away, while the same regiment and the British Maxims broke up some hundreds of dervishes who had come out with their flags from the southern face of the *dem* to attack the British on their left flank. The Warwicks then followed in on the left of the line with two companies in line, three in fours guarding the flank, and one in support, and as they entered the *dem* the Sirdar moved up the 3rd and 4th Egyptian Battalions outside the

south side of the *dem* with orders to clear the bush down to the river. All our battalions but one were now engaged, and in twenty-eight minutes, or at 8.20 A.M. the attacking line reached the river, having killed every living dervish who remained to fight, and having utterly routed the rest. The enemy was squashed as flat as though a gigantic roller had been dragged over his trenches. David Beatty, who had drawn his dirk and gone in at the head of the stormers, declared that he had had the day of his life. Many dervishes took refuge under the high bank of the river, and were killed either here or in crossing the river; many more were killed by their own horsemen when they first attempted to run; hundreds more were dying in the bush in all directions, and troops of wounded prisoners came in all day from every side. In a word, Mahmud's great western army of Kordofan was annihilated. Nearly every single Emir was killed and recognised, and Mahmud was taken. Mahmud himself had gone round the *dem* when the attack was imminent, and had found every Emir at his post; he then retired to his house, which was an interior casemate surrounded by trenches filled with his *mulazemin*. This point was struck by the 10th and 11th Sudanese in the advance, and a desperate fight took place, the *mulazemin* being killed to a man. Mahmud was saved from the bayonets by young Franks, R.A., with no little difficulty; his clothes were covered with blood, but he was unhurt.

'The British brigade formed up east of the *dem* and gave the Sirdar a tremendous reception as he rode up. He addressed a few words to the regiments, and shortly afterwards, at my suggestion, sounded the 'Cease Fire' to stop the promiscuous firing which was still going on freely all over the *dem*, and in every direction. Rawlinson and I then rode our horses down the steep bank into

the river, and allowed them to have a good drink, which they needed badly. The blacks were allowed to loot the place, and they did this very thoroughly. We took all Mahmud's ten 4-inch brass cannon, a great quantity of swords, rifles, and spears, chain armour, and many dozen flags, including those of all the chief men. The enemy's losses were so large that their army may be said to have ceased to exist; two thousand dead were counted in the *dem* and river-bed, two thousand prisoners were taken, and many thousands crawled away to die in the bush or the desert. Probably few but the horsemen will ever return to Omdurman, as the fugitives are without food, transport, or water-skins, and the gunboats have accounted for a few hundreds who have struggled as far as the Nile.

'There are of course a great many points of interest in this short and decisive campaign which I cannot refer to now. Our own losses amounted to 510 killed and wounded, of which 114 were in the British brigade. All the damage was done in about fifteen minutes, and it was the fastest and warmest fifteen minutes that I can remember, except with the Quorn. We buried our dead at three o'clock on the north-western side of the *dem*, and Lewis's brigade carried all the wounded back to Umdabia the same evening, as it was necessary to escape from the horrible smell and poisonous water of the dervish camp. I hope some special notice will be taken of this work of the Egyptian troops. The behaviour of our own troops, before, during, and after the battle was beyond all praise, and all the officers of both armies from the generals downwards were conspicuous in front of their men, and led the attack with the greatest gallantry. Never has a campaign been more prudently conducted and brought to a more decisive issue. There are a great many points

of detail in which the 2nd Brigade must be better prepared for Sudan fighting than was Gatacre's; and if I can get a run home I will tell you all about them.

'With regard to the cavalry the Egyptians framed out much better than most people expected; they charged home twice in one day, while the dervishes only shook their great spears at us and did not come on. But all agree that the Maxims really saved the situation on the 5th, and the presence of white cavalry is necessary to stiffen the arm in the advance on Khartoum. The Egyptian is a splendid fatigue-man, and his value in this campaign has been incalculable. Keppel and I were seventeen hours aground one day on the Nile in a nasty place in the enemy's country, and our forty Egyptian soldiers worked naked for hours in the water in a way no other troops in the world could have done. But he is a gentle creature is the Egyptian, and though he bore the firing on the 8th without a sign of agitation, you will notice that all the yellow battalions were in second line, a pretty clear proof of the relative estimation in which he is held. I asked the Sirdar to put one yellow battalion in first line so that we might see how they framed in the attack, but all he replied was that there was no jealousy between the various battalions of the Egyptian Army.

'There is one point about the dervish cavalry to remember; their horses are unshod; most of the desert ground over which we operated is pebbly, as if you had thrown down stones from the Brighton beach on a macadamised road, and over this the dervish horses went like cats on hot bricks; in fact, they could only travel fast in the sandy or cotton soil, or along the soft *khors*. Their horses captured were all sore and unable

to extend themselves; all our horses and mules should be shod all round.

'I hear that the English papers are publishing all sorts of comments on the insecurity of our line of communications. From the army at Ras el Hudi to Atbara Fort, which was our advanced base, this line was protected by the troops in front, and by the fort on the Nile; the convoys went without escort because the military organisation of the *hamla* is adequate to deal with stray raiders, as the transport corps can put a hundred Remingtons in line for every three hundred camels. From Atbara Camp it is four miles to the *Nuzl* (supply depôt) of Kanur; here the steamers and boats lay, and from this point right away past Berber to Geneinetti the whole line of communications was by water. There was a post at Darmali containing the heavy stuff of Gatacre's and Maxwell's brigades; a battalion at Berber strongly entrenched protected the depôt there, while at Geneinetti Bainbridge had the devil of a fort with strong *zariba* and flanking towers, held by a couple of companies and some friendlies. Not a man or a camel was on the right bank all the way from Kanur to Geneinetti, and I am convinced that the dervishes knew it. The Sirdar had three lines of wire up to Atbara Fort from Geneinetti, one on the desert on the right bank as a bait, one on the same bank concealed along the edge of the bush and grass by the river, and a third, which few people knew of, along the left bank. None of these was touched, and the enemy might have raided till they were blue and have done no harm except to club gossips at home. All the population of Berber and adjoining district were shifted across to the left bank and the islands, while the *Metemma* and *Tamai* held the highway.

'Looking back on the events of the last few weeks I can

honestly say that if we had to begin all over again I should wish nothing changed. The enemy never scored a point throughout. We bivouacked all the time with hardly any kit; the heat was severe and the dust often very trying; at the fight the thermometer stood at 108 degrees in the shade, and the whole force remained on the field without shade till we marched off. Even Kitchener was affected, and lay down for a bit on the ridge while his head was sponged to relieve a bad headache. We all suffered great discomforts, and the desert creates a thirst beyond belief, but "privations" is not the word, as no force was ever better fed. The British were given all they could eat and more, and if Gatacre made severe calls upon his men he took wonderful care to keep them fit and well fed, and as there was no beer there was no trouble, and the men were as cheerful as possible. The officers of the British regiments were worst off; in many cases *esprit de corps* made them refuse all liquor in order to be on the same footing as the men, and the officers generally had much less and much worse fare than usual while the men had more and better.

'The behaviour of the wounded, in hospital and during the trying move back to Dakhila, was splendid. Many suffered greatly, but all were in fine spirits. The Egyptian Army hospital arrangements under Gallwey were excellent; in a very short time all were dressed, shades constructed, and water provided. Our British wounded are all right *now*, and the evacuation by water and rail, and the line of communication hospital at Geneinetti will be satisfactory. We might have saved much suffering if the Röntgen rays had been provided, and, in my opinion, hoods should be fixed to stretchers as the wounded suffered much from the sun, although all the sick convoys were moved when practicable by

moonlight. You asked me a question some time ago about camel carts. I do not think they would be of much use, as the bush is often too thick up the river and in the desert side the *gebel* is often too rocky.

'It is too early to write of the future till we know the effect of our victory upon the Khalifa. You know that since I came out here I have never ceased to tell you that we must be prepared for a dervish advance, although to the last Slatin and many of the best authorities would not credit it; also that we required a reserve brigade to make the situation safe. Although the brigade needed came late, it came in time, thanks to the idiocy of the enemy who attacked three months too late. I also told you I considered Mahmud's army a gift to us from the gods, and that it was everything to us to wipe out what the Sirdar considers to be half the Khalifa's force and Slatin the flower of the dervish army, before it could get back to Omdurman, where large numbers might give us infinite trouble.

'All has turned out well, but I hope that people at home will not go from one extreme to the other and think that by the extinction of one army our task in the autumn will be effected with a less force than originally calculated. The Khalifa's army at Khartoum remains very large. We shall still want a second white brigade, cavalry, and 5-inch howitzers; the task of taking Omdurman may prove severe, and the storming of formidable entrenchments and house-to-house fighting may cause heavy losses. We see now clearly that the dervish is as good a fighting man as ever, and that he is better armed and has plenty of ammunition. The fact that he is a born fool in matters of strategy and tactics is so much to the good, but even born fools sometimes learn wisdom by experience. Mahmud ought

to be shot for taking up the position he did, exposing himself fully to the leathering of our guns, but, as he naïvely remarked, "he did not understand this kind of warfare."

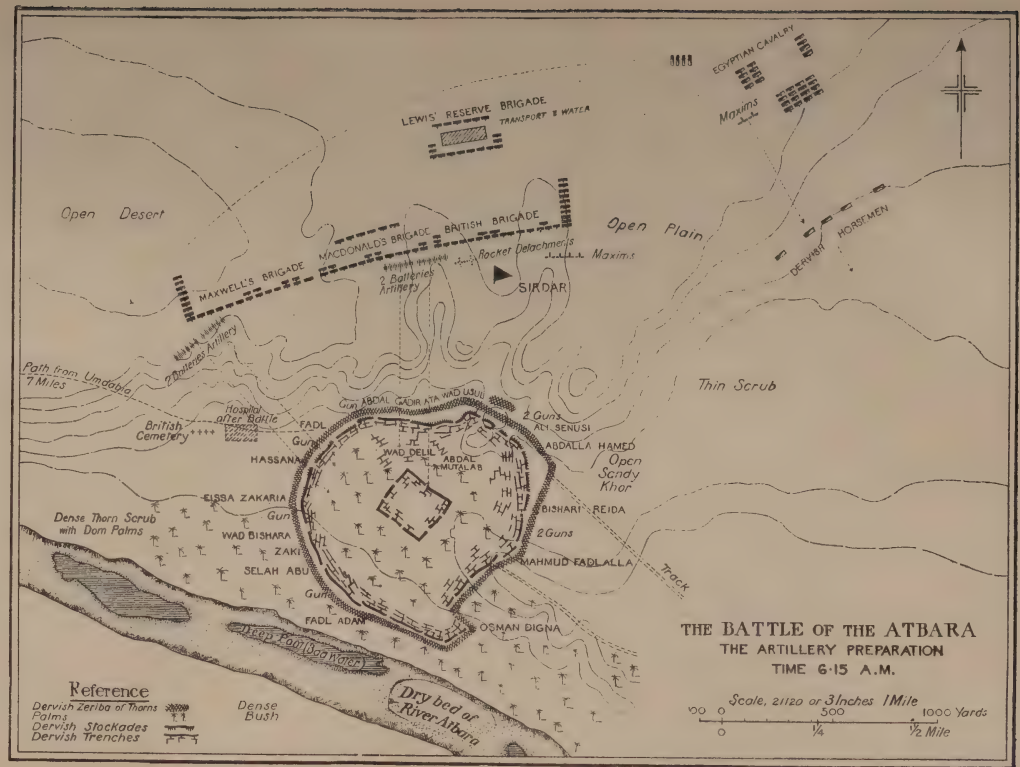
'Long's guns did well, and the double shell played the devil—some of the guns were run right up to the *zariba* and fired case. But, after looking all round the *dem*, I doubt that more than 15 or 20 per cent. of the losses were from shell-fire, and the prisoners all agreed that the artillery fire did little harm, but that the infantry fire was terrible and impossible to withstand. The dervishes have no nerves and the moral effect of guns upon them is practically *nil*; you always have to come to push of pike, and I would re-arm our infantry with the old bayonet for the work as ours are too short, broad, and thick—they often only *shoved* the enemy aside while the Egyptian bayonet went slap through. There are many other points which require attention, but I hope to come and talk them over and save a lot of toilsome correspondence.

'There is a good sketch of the *dem*, by Smyth, on the way to you with Kitchener's despatches—mine is only a rough idea from memory to show our infantry formations.

'We do not yet know what all you folk at home think of our doings. We heard the other day that we were at war with Russia, and some wag put one extra sentry on the north side of our *zariba* in consequence—but we shall soon be back in civilisation and hear whether you are satisfied. The Sirdar often discussed the situation with me by the hour, so that I think I know as much of what was at the back of his head throughout these weeks as most people. It has been a great piece of luck for me and a very useful experience.

'The Sirdar's Staff consisted of Wingate, D.M.I., Watson and Cecil, A.D.C.'s, Rawlinson (D.A.A.G. British), Blunt (Supply), Long (C.R.A.), Gallwey (P.M.O.), and myself—rather different from the usual Great General Staff of an army in the field. There is no one here over forty-eight except a few of the senior men in the British brigade—nearly all are still in the thirties. Partly owing to this, and partly to the entire absence of written orders and correspondence, there has probably never been a force in the field which has been bound together by a better feeling of good comradeship, and in which quarrels and rivalries have been so conspicuously absent.

'Excuse this scrawl, written at odd moments during my journey north. Write and give me all your news and what people think of our little campaign.—Yours ever, (Sgd.) CHARLES À COURT.'



From "The River War" By permission of Messrs Longman Green & Co.

Brevet Lieut.-Colonel C. à Court,
D.A.A.G., Egypt, 1898.

CHAPTER IX

THE OMDURMAN CAMPAIGN

On the evening of the day of the Atbara fight, after we had been forty hours under arms, the Sirdar asked me to make the best of my way to Atbara Fort in order to make sure that all was prepared for the reception of the British wounded. I was not tired, but my horse was. I had come up to the river without a horse, and had been lent one belonging to the Italian Military Attaché who was not present for the moment. It was, without exception, the slowest animal that I ever rode, and on the evening of Good Friday it was done to a turn. To ride through the night on the poor beast was unmerciful, but there were no other horses to be had, so away I went. It was a long ride, and it was not an easy matter to find one's way at night, because the bush often runs up the *khors*, and one often follows a *khor* into the desert when one thinks that one is following the river route. The bush was too thick for one to follow along the bank of the stream, and it was not untenanted by dervish runaways. So I struck into the desert, and then marched on a compass bearing all through the night, kicking the poor nag along, and being obliged to throw away a fine shirt of mail that was part of my spoil from the fight, in order to lighten the weight. I was alone and was none too sure of my bearing, so when the lights of the fort came in sight just before the dawn I was not unpleased.

Having carried out my duty I rejoined the Sirdar on his return, and he told me that he wanted me to act as brigade-major to the 2nd British Brigade when it came out, and suggested that I should take a short run home, and tell the War Office people all about events. I did not need a second invitation, and as a boat was just leaving, I threw a few things on board and jumped on deck just as the planks were being withdrawn. Sir Francis Grenfell approved of my journey when I rejoined him in Cairo, and I caught a fast P. and O. for Brindisi, which, by the way, suddenly got out of control, ran stem on into the quay at Brindisi, cut out a large chunk, and threatened to capsize as she swung back clear. I spent a very happy fortnight in London, saw all the authorities, and then posted back as fast as I could in order to help in the arrangements for the reinforcements which were due to start south from Cairo in July.

I found a busy scene on my return, and was fully occupied, not only with the public work, but also in doing hundreds of commissions for staff and people coming out, and in answering telegrams from the new battalions which were coming to us from Mediterranean garrisons, notably the 1st Grenadier Guards from Gibraltar, and the 2nd Rifle Brigade from Malta. My mornings before breakfast were spent in trying horses for the staff of the 2nd Brigade, and for the staff of Andy Wauchope who now led the 1st Brigade, Gatacre commanding the British division as it now was. It was very hard to get good horses at this time, and although I had two excellent Arabs of my own, it was not easy in the last rush to provide good ones for so many claimants.

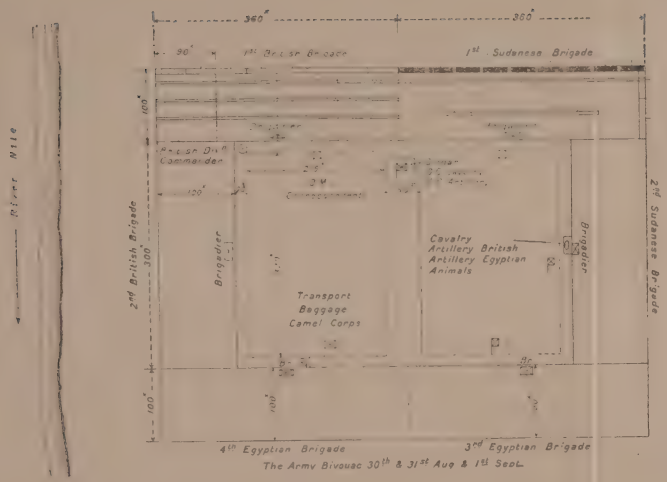
Neville Lyttelton had been given the 2nd Brigade, and

I went with him as brigade-major. David Henderson was A.D.C. and Harold Grenfell orderly officer. Lord Loch was signalling officer, and all these three were as good men as one could wish to find. The 1st Grenadiers, under Simon Hatton, were a fine battalion in which one could place implicit confidence, and the gibes of the line regiments at their expense were soon silenced. Simon Hatton was an easy man to deal with during a storm, a hard march, or a battle. Then he had the sweetness of a saint, and nothing disturbed him, but when things were quiet he was a Tartar. It was better than the other way about. Our 2nd Battalion of the Rifle Brigade was under Francis Howard, an excellent officer with a quick eye in the field, and as I knew most of the officers well we got on capitally. The 5th Fusiliers were a very fine and sturdy battalion under a most dependable officer, Lieut.-Colonel Charles Money, while the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers, under Collingwood, were a fine regiment and well commanded. The Royal Irish Fusiliers Maxims, under Churcher, were a cheery and efficient unit, and taking the brigade all round I do not think that any other brigade in the army could have improved upon it. Their conduct on the march, and their steadiness in action, were exemplary. We had no reserves called out for the campaign, and though this fact reduced our strength we had enough men for our purpose, and they were trained to the hour. There was a fine rivalry between the two British brigades, and though the 1st supposed that the 2nd would be green and inexperienced, I do not think that the latter put a foot wrong throughout the campaign, or ceded the palm in any way to Wauchope's fine brigade.

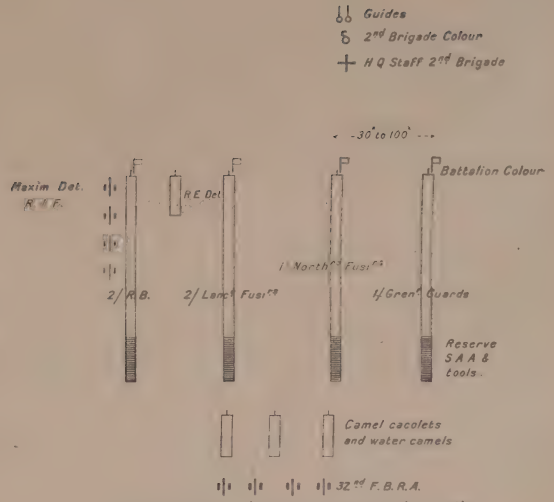
Lyttelton and his staff proceeded southward from Cairo on July 29, and on reaching Atbara Fort we

became busy in receiving and arranging the units as these followed us up the river. The Nile and the Atbara were now swirling down in full flood, and we were camped on the right back of the Atbara at its confluence with the Nile. A lot of great fish were caught by the men, and one taken on August 13 weighed 84 lb. We kept the brigade fit by marches and field firing in the desert, and on one of these occasions a covey of sandgrouse, which rose in front of the Grenadiers, were all knocked over by the bullets from their rifles. Truth is stranger than fiction, and whenever I tell the story that I once went grouse-shooting with a battalion of Grenadiers on the 12th of August and with excellent results, nobody credits it. We sent our horses up the river on the left bank of the Nile by road in order to save river transport, and during our exercises at the Atbara some of our mounted officers rode donkeys. Gascoigne, the adjutant of the Grenadiers, was one day caught by the kodaks as he was 'reining up' his moke and saluting Hatton, also on a moke, and this photograph of a quite unique event in the history of the Guards became a prime favourite with Her Majesty Queen Victoria. I wish that another incident could also have been recorded by the photographer. This was when Hatton's orderly was giving his colonel a leg-up on a moke for the first time. Accustomed to give the colonel a good lift up to a big horse, the orderly lifted so vigorously that Hatton flew right over the donkey and fell flat on his back in the sand on the off-side. The atmosphere became murky, and I hastily cleared off.

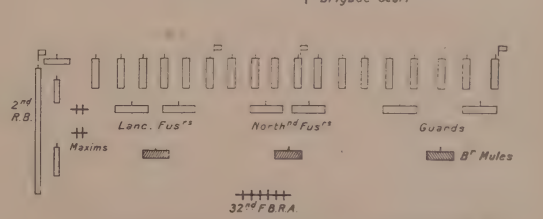
It was uncommonly hot between 9 A.M. and 5.30 P.M., and I see from an old letter that the thermometer stood at 110 degrees on August 14, while for two nights



The Army Bivouac 30th & 31st Aug & 1st Sept.



March Formation 2nd Brigade. August 25th to 28th



March Formation 2nd Brigade Aug. 30th and Sept. 1st

running we had such a violent storm of wind and dust that sleep was impossible. But when there was no storm the nights were pleasant, and the early mornings in the desert were perfectly delightful. When the steamers returned from conveying the 1st British Brigade from Atbara Fort to Wad Hamed, we went up to the river and reached the assembly point on August 25. The river scenery was interesting. Near Metemma the river widens to nearly three miles. The number of different kinds of birds was endless, and the islands swarmed with duck, geese, ibis, flamingoes, storks, plover, kingfishers, and every sort of curious bird, all very tame. Guinea-fowl were also seen, and thousands of sandgrouse. We had taken up with us from Wadi Halfa five goats, and very useful they were in supplying milk. One fell overboard and was drowned. A second broke its leg and had to be destroyed. This ought to have left three, but we found that we had six when we reached Wad Hamed. These things only happen in Egypt. We were very closely packed on board the steamers and on the gyassas which each steamer towed. The eddies and whirlpools and the current made the Nile very tricky, and two men were drowned on the way up. At one point we pulled up for wood at a place where the Sheikh Ibrahim's Jaalin levies were encamped. They were a fine set of cut-throats, who fought well against us at Abu Klea and lost four thousand men when Mahmud took Metemma. We told Ibrahim that the Guards in our barges were the *mulazemin* of Queen Victoria, and he was deeply interested that they and Lyttelton had come all the way from England to fight the Khalifa.

The following letter, which I wrote to Count Gleichen, then in charge of a section of the Intelligence Division

in London, tells the story of subsequent events so fully that I reproduce it.

'OMDURMAN, *Sept.* 15, 1898.

'MY DEAR GLEICHEN,—All the troops sent from Cairo left according to the programme which I sent to you, and the machinery worked so well that the first concentration at Atbara Fort was complete a day in advance of the time specified. This was a very satisfactory result, and, in addition, all the arrangements for feeding and watering realised our anticipations and the troops were brought up as quickly as possible and in fine fighting trim. I hope that the work of Sir F. Grenfell and the Cairo Staff will meet with some recognition for this success.

'I left Cairo on July 29, and the 2nd Brigade reached Wad Hamed on August 25. On the 26th we marched in the afternoon to turn the hills of the Sixth Cataract by the desert route, bivouacking in a waterless spot in a square of the whole division, after a hard march in which many men of both brigades fell out, and on the 27th we marched on in good trim to Gebel Royan, where we received a hearty welcome from the whole Egyptian Army already assembled there. The total strength was 25,800 men, with 44 guns and 20 Maxims, in addition to 36 guns and 24 Maxims in the ten gunboats, and we had over 7000 animals of all sorts.

'August 27.—We had sent back our tents from Wad Hamed to Nasri Island: the waterproof sheets, mess and canteen stores and spare baggage went forward in two gyassas; one of these was sunk in the cataract. From Wad Hamed until our return to the Atbara the only shade our men got from the blazing sun was from the blanket shelters. I had these copied in Cairo from a pattern I had seen in the Atbara campaign, as I felt

sure the Sirdar would never be able to take on our tents. All the regiments of the 2nd Brigade had the poles, ropes, pickets, etc., to rig up these shelters with their new pattern blankets, and I believe we owe it to these shelters that we brought so many rifles into line at the battle, and that our casualties on the march did not exceed those of the better acclimatised 1st Brigade.

'Up to August 27 we had marched by divisions; the British Division by brigades, ours being as follows (see Sketch No. 1): each battalion in column of route, all four battalions abreast; Maxims, R.E. Det., and 32 F.B. (attached for march purposes) wherever convenient. This was a flexible formation, and could be adapted to any ground; mounted officers rode on in front to choose the best roads when the country was difficult or the bush thick. Our baggage camels and field hospitals were massed in rear of the division; the brigade in rear finding one battalion as rearguard. The cavalry covered our front. On August 28 we marched to Wady el Abid, all the army together, and for the first time we realised the impressive strength and order of the advance. On the 29th we had a rest day, and on the 30th set out again, the whole army marching in fighting formation ready for anything. In this formation the British Divison took the left, the Egyptian Army the right and the reserve, and the whole army presented a magnificent spectacle when one could view it from rising ground. We kept to the old system first begun at our Kanur experiments before the Atbara, and I still think it simple and good. As a left flank brigade we always kept the left battalion in column or in fours, right in front, as shown on Sketch 2. Our other three battalions had six companies in front line in company columns in fours, and two companies in support. The

centre company of the 5th Fusiliers usually directed; the guides and our brigade colour kept some two hundred yards ahead in open ground, and the directing company of the 5th Fusiliers followed in its wake. This formation is a very handy and flexible one for getting through scrub and rough ground, gives the men plenty of air and the minimum of fatigue; and line can be formed in a brace of shakes, the supporting companies filling up gaps.

'Our battalion colours were of the greatest use, as they showed the officer riding alongside the directing company exactly where the flank companies of the outer battalion were, and he slowed down the pace whenever they got a bit behind. They were also invaluable in laying out camp, or a fighting line. All our men were now hard and fit; neither heat nor frequent dust storms, nor heavy rain at night caused a single grumble; they were all as keen as mustard.

'On the night of August 30, the whole army bivouacked in square at Sayal, as it also did on the night of the 31st and morning of the 1st September at Wady Suetne. I enclose the original plan (Sketch 3). We occupied a rectangular space 720 × 560 yards, and a precious squash it was. The battalions bivouacked generally on a double company front; in rear of them I had to squash in five field hospitals, A.S.C., the 32nd F.B., Maxims, and 2nd Brigade Staff. Cooking had to be done outside the *zariba*, which was formed as soon as possible after arrival in camp. To lay out this square, the army, divisional, and brigade staff officers rode on a mile or so from camp with adjutants carrying battalion colours, but I cannot affirm that the method of laying out the points was a success; too many people interfered and changed the points for trivial reasons; in consequence

the battalions were continually shifted after arrival, and rarely settled down under one and a half hours of badgering. This vexation was largely due to the rivalry between the British and the Egyptian armies—a rivalry good in itself, but in matters of detail occasionally galling.

'On the 31st we marched at 5.45 A.M., and bivouacked at 1 P.M. The ground was again undulating, and covered with thick bush, which often made marching slow. This day the cavalry got touch of the enemy, and reported a *dem* on the Kerreri hills; the gunboats were now at work, and we were evidently within reach of our goal.

'On the 1st of September we marched at 5.45 A.M. as before, the 2nd Brigade leading, 1st Brigade in rear, with the Seaforths on rearguard. We were not sorry to get out of the bush country a few miles before reaching the Kerreri ridge. From the latter point, which was left undefended by the enemy, we obtained our first view of Khartoum, and saw the fleet of gunboats running up the east bank, shelling town and forts. As the cavalry sent no word of impending attack we moved on, after about an hour's halt, to the village of Egeiga (*vide* Milo Talbot's map accompanying Sirdar's despatches). Here we formed the usual bivouac, in and about the village, made a *zariba*, fed and watered, and I was about to swallow a hasty meal when news came that the Khalifa had marched out of Omdurman and was five miles off and moving towards us.

'The Sirdar in person now laid out generally the fighting line which we were to occupy. Half the front or western face of the position, and all the left or southern face was allotted to the British Division, the remainder to the Egyptian Army. The 1st British Brigade took the right of our division, having Maxwell's Brigade on

its right. When Snow had got his markers ready I took up the line on to the river, placing five companies of the Grenadiers on the front face, and one round the angle where the Maxims are shown on Talbot's sketch; the Northumberland Fusiliers and Lancashires were placed next, each battalion being given 180 to 200 yards of front to defend.

'The Sirdar had told me to draw the line straight down to the river, but on placing the R.B. markers I found that this line would give them low ground where they could do little good, so I took it on myself to throw forward a flank about 100 yards long at an angle of about 110° to the left face, where a rising knoll allowed the R.B. to flank the whole of the left face. I had just fitted in the R.B., their left thrown back to the river, when Colonel Long rode up and declared that my pet knoll was the best artillery position in the whole field, and that he wished to place three batteries on it. We gave way of course at once, and placed three companies of the R.B. on the left of the guns, one on the right and the rest in support. The 32nd F.B. took the left or highest point of the knoll, with two Egyptian Army batteries on its right. The command was only 4 or 5 feet above the plain, but the ground in our front was so flat that it made just all the difference. There was a straggling village running up to within 150 yards of the R.B., with a good *zariba*; the latter was pulled away and placed in front of our line and some houses pulled down; the men lay down as usual some 20 yards in rear of the *zariba*. After 5 P.M. the cavalry brought word that the enemy had halted. We remained in position as we stood, all night, momentarily expecting an attack. Soon after 8 P.M. Slatin appeared with some spies, and sent them out to our front as listening posts. It was explained to

all our troops that if Slatin's men ran in "Lu-lu-ing" and shouting that the dervishes were coming, it meant that a really serious attack was coming on. There was a good moon, but during the first part of the night many clouds temporarily obscured the light, and our sentries could only see about 150 yards to their front. At 11 P.M. shots were fired from Gebel Surgham, the conical hill 1½ miles to the S.W., and at 11.30 Slatin's villains dashed in "Lu-lu-ing," and forcing their way through the *zariba*. The men, sentries excepted, were all fast asleep, but in a moment were on their feet, and it speaks well for their steadiness that not a shot was fired at the unceremonious friendlies nor a sound heard. General Lyttelton, who was on his feet in an instant, went round and found all the battalions standing in their places, and as steady as rocks.

'Nothing came of this alarm, and we all lay down to sleep again. It is probable that the dervishes intended to make a night attack, but they heard in the evening that we were intending to do the same thing, and so remained watching for us, and were only undeceived when our bugles, sounding réveillé, showed that we had not moved.

'At daybreak on Friday, September 2, our cavalry patrols went out and soon brought word that the enemy was advancing to the attack. We were perfectly ready for him. The Egyptian army had dug a trench and made a small parapet in their front; in the 2nd Brigade we had only the *zariba*, and had begun to pull this away to enable the men to fire kneeling and lying down and to allow us to move out at will, when the work was stopped, and we were ordered to replace the bushes, an order which annoyed me, as it entailed nearly all our firing being done in two ranks standing. The Maxims

of the R.I.F. were placed on a little knoll in the left centre of the Guards, where they had a splendid field of fire to south and west. The rest of the force was placed, as shown on Talbot's sketch, the 1st British Brigade on our right, succeeded by Maxwell, Macdonald, and Lewis, in the order named, while Collinson's new brigade remained in reserve guarding the *hamla*, which was packed tightly in Egeiga, and had constructed a fine parapet of camel saddles, the *hamla* men standing behind with their Remingtons.

'The Egyptian Army cavalry, camel corps, and H.A. battery with two galloping Maxims, were away on the right on the Kerreri ridge; the 21st Lancers came in to our left as the action began, and sheltered below the river bank. The remainder of our guns and Maxims were placed as shown on Talbot's sketch. Each one of our units had measured and marked its ranges; the water and reserve S.A.A. were handy, and the field hospitals prepared in the village. We were quite ready for the curtain to ring up.

'At about 6 A.M. Broadwood's cavalry patrols were seen retiring across our western front from south to north, and following them, not 400 yards behind, appeared dense masses of the enemy with many banners, marching, or rather running, some five to six miles an hour, in regular formation, and apparently intending to sweep round and envelop our whole position. In front the light green flag of Ali Wad Helu was conspicuous on an enormous pole; the dark green flag of Sheikh Ed Din, the Khalifa's son, was leading the next mass; Yakub's flag followed, and innumerable lesser flags of the leading Emirs covered the plain. Some 40,000 men were already visible, and as they drew out before us a great shout went up from the forest of spears and banners, followed

by an ear-piercing cry from a single dervish, which caused some one to remark that he deserved to be secured as first whip of the future Khartoum hounds.

'At 6.30 A.M. the enemy's masses being then 2700 yards off, and still marching slightly E. of N. across our main front from our left to our right, and showing more men every minute, the 32nd Field Battery opened on them, and in a few moments the whole of our available guns were in action. The artillery fired right well, every shell telling and leaving a great gap in the dense masses in our front. In a moment the central dervish mass under Osman Azrak changed direction to the right as though by word of command, and bore straight down upon the British Division, attracted, and perhaps diverted from their original plan, by Long's guns on my knoll, which were doing great execution. Watching the enemy closely I saw mounted men riding on the front and flanks of each mass and directing their movements; one could not withhold one's admiration from the rapid and orderly way in which these dense masses of men were manœuvred under such a severe fire. At 2500 yards' range the dervish riflemen opened a tremendous fire—a feat which only caused us to laugh. Almost at the same moment fresh enemies appeared from the right wing of the hostile army and began swarming over the eastern spurs of Gebel Surgham, bearing straight down towards the centre of the 2nd British Brigade. This wing, I believe, was led by the Khalifa Sherif, though his red flag I personally did not notice. It consisted mainly of footmen, but in the centre a large body of horsemen appeared like gallant crusaders, their Emirs bearing large white banners, some forty in number, the whole presenting a truly magnificent spectacle. At this

point it looked as if our brigade were going to have all the fun of the fair. When the whole strength of this wing had come over the hill and was making for us at their best pace, the three batteries on our left turned their attention to them, the first shell bursting in the centre of the white banners. Still they came on until our Maxims, followed by long-range volleys by the Guards and the 5th Fusiliers, and shells from the gunboats, began to tear them down. Banner after banner went down, and the ground was strewn with dead, until at last the remnant, neither running, nor breaking, nor wavering, bore away to their left to join the centre attack under Osman Azrak, being fearfully hammered as they passed solemnly across our front.

'Meanwhile the central attack, though greatly shaken and broken up, was reinforced by fresh masses and came on again. Our left being now clear, the R.B. and 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers were sent away to the right, General Gatacre informing the Sirdar that he had two battalions ready to support the Egyptian Brigades, but on the Sirdar replying that he did not need assistance, these two battalions were halted in rear of the 1st British Brigade and suffered some casualties without being able to take further part in this phase of the action. The batteries from the left were also brought up to resist the attack on our centre.

'This attack was pressed home with great bravery, but was swept away by the tremendous fire poured into it. A few hundred riflemen managed to creep up under a very slight depression to some sand hillocks 600 yards in front of the Camerons where they were not easy to see, and most of the casualties in the division were caused by these men who eventually were all killed, the nearest about 300 yards off. Of our brigade, only

the Guards could use their rifles against this attack, and did so well.

'While the last phase of the central attack was in progress, Ali Wad Helu and the Sheikh Ed Din, by a wide turning movement, had secured the western slopes of the Kerreri ridge, and, marching just north of the crest so as to avoid our guns, came into collision with Broadwood and the Camel Corps. The Sheikh Ed Din's column was a very large one, possibly 15,000 strong: it was fired upon by the H.A. Battery, the Camel Corps, and dismounted cavalry, but though the enemy fell thick, the rest pressed on; they got within 300 yards of the Camel Corps and guns; the ground was very bad, and for a moment our detached force was in quite a tight place: three guns had to be temporarily abandoned, and at one time it appeared as if Broadwood's cavalry would have to sacrifice itself to secure the retreat of the Camel Corps. At that moment, two of our gunboats, dropping down the river, effectively intervened, and checked the enemy's rush. The Camel Corps got away down to the gunboats with a loss of sixty killed and wounded, and the cavalry retired five miles down the river, losing forty men.

'Fortunately there were few, if any, Baggara Horse with this attack, and all through the Baggara have shown astounding stupidity in preferring to charge unbroken infantry to cavalry. Broadwood's Maxims had been ordered back to the *zariba* just as Ali Wad Helu's attack began, an unfortunate order, but one that he felt bound to obey. The gunboats on our right flank down stream continued to fire with great effect on Ali Wad Helu's men, who, after an effort, not long pressed in face of our gun-fire, to join in the attack on the main position, retired the way they had come, but

still in dangerously good order, though they had suffered considerably.

'All the attacks had now been beaten off and no formed body was visible in our immediate front, only crowds of broken fugitives and isolated groups collecting the killed and wounded. Soon after 8 A.M. the 21st Lancers moved slowly out to the eastern spur of Gebel Surgham, and I believe that one of Martin's patrols reported that a heavy column of the enemy still remained west of the hill, but I cannot learn that this message ever reached the Sirdar.

'At 8.30 the order was received to march on Omdurman in echelon of brigades from the left, Lyttelton's brigade leading. We formed up at once outside the *zariba* in the formation given in Sketch 2, except that the 32nd F.B. marched in rear of the Lancashires and the Maxims were on the right of the Guards. As we topped the eastern spur of Gebel Surgham, the peak being then about 800 yards to our right, we saw the dust from the 21st Lancers' charge. This regiment, advancing along the camel road to Omdurman, covered by combat patrols, had seen forty or fifty men standing apparently alone, and the regiment closed up to the centre patrol to charge. In rear of the dervish party there were 2500 men densely packed in a *khor*, and the patrol only saw these when too late, the sergeant and four men being all killed. The regiment was received by a heavy fire, but immediately charged obliquely towards their left, across the right section of the enemy in their front, sweeping everything before them, and killing, according to Colonel Martin, some 150 men: in this charge the Lancers suffered severely, losing twenty-one men killed and forty-five wounded, besides having over one hundred horses placed out of action. Reforming in rear, Martin

dismounted his men and engaged the enemy, who retired slowly in a N.W. direction, carrying away most of their dead apparently, for our search party sent out only found twenty corpses.

'As we came over the hill and saw the last phase of the Lancer fight, a heavy and sustained rifle fire broke out on our right from Gebel Surgham and the plain beyond. We were marching south in echelon, the 2nd Brigade leading, followed by the 1st Brigade—Maxwell, Lewis, and then Macdonald. In forming the brigade echelons, time had not been allowed for the rear brigades to get into position before we were moved off, nor had any distances been named between brigade echelons, consequently the 2nd Brigade were almost treading on our heels. I rode back to protest, but all the answer I got was "You don't think we are going to let you enter Khartoum before us, do you?" As Lewis came on as fast as he could, there was a gap of 800 yards between Lewis's and Macdonald's brigades, and the latter was in a position where, had it been commanded by a man of less force of character and coolness than Macdonald, a temporary reverse might have followed.

'Seeing the Khalifa's reserve mass with its black flag coming out from the security of the western slopes of Gebel Surgham, where we since know it had remained all the morning, taking no part in the action, Macdonald did not conform with the movements of the rest of the brigades which were now all heading south and moving forward, but remained facing west and opened fire. Some dervishes had also crowned Gebel Surgham and opened fire on the right flank and rear of Lewis's Brigade, which was just below them, east of the hill. This fire fell chiefly on the 7th Egyptian Battalion of Lewis's Brigade. This battalion was in support, and had no

white officers: it recoiled slightly. No immediate attempt was made by Lewis to support Macdonald, for though the latter had reported that the enemy was on his right, Lewis had only received fresh instructions to push on. The 13th Battalion of Maxwell's brigade, however, cleared the hill and began firing on the Khalifa's masses which were advancing on Macdonald: Collinson moved out of the *zariba* to protect Macdonald's right and rear: the 1st British Brigade was hastily recalled to support Macdonald, while our brigade changed front to the right and closed up to Maxwell's left to make good the withdrawal of Wauchope's men—not the easiest movement in the world on the march—and our two brigades, Lyttelton's and Maxwell's, pivoting on the hill, wheeled round to catch the dervishes on their retreat. In spite of these movements, and the opportune advance of some artillery and Maxims into action, Macdonald was almost left to himself in the plain. The great black flag of the Khalifa, surrounded by the best and bravest of the *mulazemin*, came gallantly on, and a tremendous effort was made to overwhelm Macdonald. The enemy were swept away by the fire, and each moment fresh troops came up on our side pouring a destructive fire into the Khalifa's right.

'Meanwhile Ali Wad Helu and the Sheikh Ed Din, seeing the Khalifa's effort, came down from the Kerreri ridge and marched upon Macdonald's exposed and somewhat undefended right flank. Had these two attacks been simultaneous, it would have been serious, but fortunately the Khalifa's attack was as good as smashed before the weight of Ali Wad Helu's began to tell. Macdonald changed front to the right on his right battalion, not mechanically, but bringing his right

battalion round first and then withdrawing battalions from in front of the Khalifa as he could spare them, and prolonging his new front right and left. This brilliant manœuvre, executed steadily under a heavy fire, was possible because Macdonald's regiments were good and had been for three years almost continuously under him. The 1st British Brigade was now behind him, and the Lincolns and Camel Corps came up on his right: finally this last attack was beaten off with great loss, the Baggara horsemen in small parties charging close up to the rifles of the Sudanese. In this action the 2nd Egyptians were not behind their fighting comrades, the 9th, 10th, and 11th Sudanese, and Macdonald tells me they fought well and steadily.

'The entire dervish army was now hopelessly routed, and of the thousand banners which they had followed so splendidly, not one was left standing but those planted in the ground and surrounded by the dead and the dying. Meanwhile on the left our own brigade had swept the ground clear, driving away the remnants and smashing up the men who had resisted the Lancers. Aligned with Maxwell, after a most tiring wheel, we stood right on the flank and almost across the line of retreat of the defeated army, and as the mobs of fugitives, almost headed off from Omdurman, came flying across our front, we gave them the *coup de grâce*. The action was now over; it was 11.30 A.M., and in every direction, as far as one could see with glasses, the country was covered by swarms of fugitives, flying as sheep which have no shepherd.

'We formed fours left as we stood and marched away, the Rifle Brigade leading, directly upon the dome of the Mahdi's Tomb; parallel with us, and just out of range, fled the fugitives from the battle, endeavouring

to reach the town before us. Our cavalry followed them up and fired on them, but were in no state to pursue them. I rode on ahead to reconnoitre the Khor Shambat, telling George Thesiger, who was leading the Rifle Brigade, to march upon me. I saw a small group of horsemen ahead, in the mirage which was now confusing, and on nearing them found it consisted of the Sirdar and his staff. The brigade reached the Khor Shambat after a trying day's work, at 1 P.M., watered and fed, was joined by its transport, and at 4.30 P.M. pressed on into the town at the heels of Maxwell's brigade which had, to our vexation, been ordered to precede us.

'We were all ignorant of the situation in the town, but all saw the need for a final effort before the day closed, in order to seize the forts and great wall before the dervishes could recover from their leathering. Maxwell found the town crammed with armed men, nearly caught the Khalifa, and seized the forts, which were not greatly damaged by gunboat fire and were still occupied, as well as other important places in the town. We marched in, at first in four parallel columns of fours, the battalions abreast, on the great road, but as the latter narrowed, we had to form single column of route. The whole place was choked with troops, dervishes, women, camels, horses, donkeys, sheep, goats, turkeys, servants, mess kit, and all conceivable impedimenta. Most of the dervishes had turned their jibbas inside out, and had removed their spear-heads from the shafts. We pushed our way through, the Guards leading, their drums and fifes playing the "British Grenadiers" as though we were going down St. James's Street. Firing was still going on all over the town; finally at the Great Mosque we could force

our way no farther ; night was coming on, and we had no orders. General Gatacre directed us to turn to the right and make our way out into the desert clear of the town, which was stinking past belief, so away we went, and General Lyttelton just managed to unite and form up his brigade in line of quarter columns before it became dark. Other troops trickled after us, or dead-beat lay down in the streets and slept till morning, Gatacre remaining with Wauchope in the town. After dark, the Sirdar and his staff turned up at our bivouac. I was then going round our sentries and challenged his party. He seemed delighted to find one of his brigades united and in good order ; he dumped down in the midst of us and slept the sleep of the just ; the bivouac was damp and foul.

'For the rest, you know what followed : the fine piece of audacity of marching gaily into a fortified town as if it belonged to us met with a deserved reward : the whole resistance collapsed, all armed Baggara who resisted were shot, and returning fugitives, other than Baggara, disarmed. One of the Baggara in the morning rode solemnly on a donkey into the middle of the army, pulled a rifle from under his jibba, dismounted, and began to shoot. Paradise was not refused him. Early on September 3 we made for the water north of the town where the division bivouacked, remaining there till it left for the north. Maxwell was appointed Governor of the town, and rules it with an iron hand. The escape of the Khalifa was the only disappointment, but we can say that his rule is over and that, in due course, he will meet the fate he deserves.

'Our losses amount to nearly 500 all told, those of the British being 165. A careful count of dervish dead, made by a party of English officers which I

detailed on the 4th, when, no doubt, many bodies had been buried or removed, gave 10,840 as the tally for the day's work, exclusive of many killed in the town, and some 15,000 estimated as wounded. The town itself, the hills, villages, and river banks were full of wounded whose numbers cannot be accurately stated. A map has been made showing the sections counted by different officers and the places where the dead were thickest.

'We were a very fortunate army. The dervishes had many chances, and availed themselves of none. Had they held Shabluka, they would have forced us to fight in a difficult and waterless country where our gunboats were useless. Had they given battle in the thick scrub, they would have placed themselves almost on equal terms with us, and the weight of their 60,000 fighting men would have told. Had they attacked our widely extended line on the night of September 1-2, it is almost certain, considering their reckless gallantry, that their masses must have broken in somewhere. Had they held the mud houses, forts, and walls of Omdurman, we should hardly have turned them out with a loss of less than 3000 men. No, they were gentlemen to the last, and attacked, confident of victory, a force in position, having a clear field of fire of 3000 yards, and provided with magazine rifles, artillery, and Maxims. Against this force, with its flanks secured and protected by gunboats, all barbaric Africa would have stormed in vain, and the greater the numbers the greater would have been the slaughter.

'The slightness of our own loss is to be attributed to the fact that we were properly led, in the first place, and next that we made full use of our arms up to their extreme ranges, practically destroying the enemy before

he was able to use his arms with effect. With double the numbers, we lost about the same in five hours' fighting that we did in a quarter of an hour at the Atbara.

'Our men expressed disappointment that they got no hand-to-hand fighting, and were furious with the artillery for not allowing the attacks to come closer before they opened. Had the dervish masses got within 500 yards of us it is true that we should have wiped out another six or seven thousand of the enemy, but our own losses, instead of being insignificant, would have been heavy, and the wounds, as at the Atbara, very severe. As the desired result has been obtained at the minimum cost to ourselves, I think we ought to be satisfied : it is no time to have thousands of wounded on your hands when you are 1600 miles from your base. Many dervishes shammed dead and began to shoot after we had passed over them. Harold Grenfell had just left me on one occasion when a dervish jumped up and fired at his back. He missed, and a sergeant of the Grenadiers accounted for him. It was by the Sirdar's direct personal order that our infantry opened fire at extreme ranges at which they had never practised. Most of our wounded are doing well, and the wounds are very different from those at the Atbara. Our artillery fire, though very effective, did not *stop* the enemy, who bravely continued to advance nearly a mile suffering tremendous losses. When they came under our long-ranging Maxims and Lee-Metfords, no formed body was able to exist. They got nearer to the Martinis because the firing of the Sudanese was wilder, especially at the longer ranges, and fire discipline less perfect, but the result was the same in the end.

'The dervishes declare that the Martini wounds are

much more severe than those of the Lee-Metford, and that most of the wounded who escaped from the field were hit by the "little bullet" of the English. I may add that nearly all the British fire consisted of section volleys, except when it came to picking off single men. After we marched out, all our fire was still under perfect control, and was delivered with great steadiness; the results of many long-range volleys was beyond our anticipations.

'The artillery had a rare innings, and took full advantage of it: never, perhaps, has modern artillery had a finer target, nor has it been able to fire so continuously and in such safety. The superiority of the fire, movement, and training of the 32nd Field Battery was very marked. Williams simply never let the enemy alone—it was pound, pound, pound from first to last. The mule teams were a great success; in accompanying Lyttelton's brigade in the advance, the 32nd Field Battery trotted out in front, took position, and covered our advance by a rapid fire.

'The howitzers were landed on the east bank, under the protection of Eddy Wortley's friendlies, and sent 420 shells into Omdurman; at 3500 yards they tore down half the dome of the Mahdi's tomb and made several openings in the great wall, but perhaps hardly breached it as cleanly as one might have desired for storming. I am inclined to think that the howitzers played the part of the terrier and induced Reynard to come out of his earth; they certainly scandalised the feminine element, who received us with shrill and continuous ululation expressive of great relief.

'I shall be curious to see the comments on the Lancer charge. It was more or less involuntary; it neither frightened nor hurt the dervishes much, and it practically

ruined the Lancers. The latter marched off from the Atbara with 30 officers and 450 men and horses, and returned with 16 officers, 211 men, and 280 horses. The trick of showing a few men and keeping the main body in reserve well hidden is one well known to the Egyptian cavalry: the dervishes do not fear cavalry, and neither sword nor lance has any terror for them; they stood up and gave as good as they got, only funking the pistols. No cavalry against such an enemy and such numbers, should act without galloping Maxims. At the same time the moral effect of the charge was so good that I think we ought to extol it and all who took part in it; it was a fine lesson to the Egyptian cavalry, and will be a historical event for a regiment without annals.

'Our Maxims, manned by the R.I.F., were capitally handled and shot beautifully. Lyttelton gave Churcher a free hand to come into action wherever he could be of most service at the moment. At the same time, during the infantry advance, it is everything for Maxims to be run out 50 to 100 yards and to open fire to cover the movement: man-handled Maxims on wheels cannot do this, and unless they are so horsed that they can, they lose much of their usefulness in this kind of fighting. Our small detachments of sappers were useful in many ways to the brigade, and also did good work for the Sirdar. Supplies never failed, though we often ran down very low; we got no fresh bread from the day we left Royan Island till our return to the Atbara, and felt the want of it; the biscuits and tinned meat were all right, but the men got dead sick of them.

'The 2nd Brigade were left at Omdurman till the last; Lyttelton and his staff leaving with the last boat on September 16. The camp and town were poisonous,

and we were all more or less off-colour after a fortnight's inaction, though we were fit enough to march across Africa the day we arrived. Inaction destroys a British army quicker than any hardships. In spite of strict medical inspections, we dropped a good many men on the way up. At Royan Island our 2nd Brigade left 158 sick and weakly men, the 1st Brigade leaving some 250; some of these came on later in the gunboats. On September 1, the 2nd Brigade had 119 officers and 3152 non-commissioned officers and men fit for duty, the battalions varying from 776 to 731; on an average we dropped some 150 per battalion north of Omdurman.

'Our camel transport was as efficient as during the last campaign, and the camels were fitter.

'The brigade took:—

90 camels for one day's supply.
85 ,, ,, five field hospitals.
274 ,, ,, water, blankets, kits, shelter poles, mess, and canteen stores, etc.

'What the numbers against us really were is not easy to say. Macdonald and Broadwood, who are sober people, both estimated them at 60,000. The Intelligence are said to have underestimated the numbers which the Khalifa could put in the field, and I am sure that the masses we saw surprised every one from the Sirdar downwards. Happily the enemy attacked in such a manner that his large numbers were of no use whatever.

'Though our force was a little less handy than during the Atbara campaign, everything worked smoothly and well: there was exceptionally little jealousy and friction, and I hope the folk at home will think the work was well done.—Yours ever,

'CHARLES À COURT.'

Sketch Map of the

BATTLE OF OMDURMAN

2nd Sept 1898.

Reproduced in the Intelligence Division, War Office, from a tracing, which accompanied the Sirdar's Despatches

CHAPTER X

SUDAN MEMORIES

When we went up the river for the final stage of the campaign, the tragedy of materialism had not yet overwhelmed Philæ, and we visited this noble remnant of a mighty age. There, graven upon the stone, we read the names of Bonaparte's generals who had penetrated thus far into the great unknown, and then had gone back, leaving nothing but their names behind them. We left no names, but as we returned we thought that we had left something better and a more imperishable monument in our conversion of barbarism to civilisation and the certain promise of peace and happiness to the dwellers by the river of marvels.

What a river, and what a country! With its irresistible magnet the Nile draws its worshippers ever back to its shrine, and dark will be the day when we shall say to ourselves, Never shall I see the Nile again! The majesty of the wealth of waters, the holy calm that pervades them, the gorgeous sunrises and soft melting sunsets, the rose-tinted Pyramids that tell of the past, and the infinite distances which merge away into the mirage and the haze, can never be out of the memory of those who have travelled on the mighty river. And how wondrous is the desert! The real desert, the desert in which you stand and look round and on all sides see nothing but sand and rock, glowing and seared with intensity of heat. Not a sign of life, and the purest of

pure air to breathe, and the feeling of being absolutely alone in the world. It is good; and when at night the soft, dark, blue vault is lit up with many great glistening stars, and the Great Bear is far away and far down on the northern horizon, how wonderful it all seems, and how infinitely peaceful after the rush and racket of the Western world! It is good to be alive on the desert and the Nile, and no other scenery on earth quite makes up for its extraordinary charm. It must be, surely, the ante-room of Heaven.

But even deserts are not always what they seem. When that great railway adventure began of spanning the desert, with the enemy at the farther end of it, we counted not at all on water since the oldest inhabitant had told us that we should find none. We found plenty by sinking for it, and when a stationmaster watered a little patch of shell and sand, and planted seed, forthwith as though by magic there sprang up a crop which between our coming and our going rose from nothing to a man's height. Some day all this country will blossom like a rose and the glories of ancient times will be revived. For centuries the Nile has poured its richness and fertility uselessly into the sea, and only a part of Lower Egypt has benefited by its bounteousness. These things will greatly change in time, and the stored-up waters will bring back wealth and population to a much-harassed land.

Kitchener's Staff, in the Atbara Campaign, was small in numbers. There were just Charles Long, Thomas Gallwey, Ned Cecil, Jemmy Watson, Reginald Wingate, Harry Rawlinson, Blunt, and myself. There was no Chief Staff Officer. I asked the Sirdar one day whether he would not bring up Rundle, who was nominally chief staff officer, was a friend of mine, and was eating his

heart out at Halfa, but Kitchener replied that he did not mean to do so, as a chief of staff always 'created a channel'! The Sirdar disliked channels. He was not only commander but chief staff officer as well. He scarcely ever issued a written order, and confined himself to curt telegrams, the forms for which he carried in his helmet. He gave his orders for operations by word of mouth to Hunter and Gatacre, for medical services to Gallwey, to Long for the artillery, to Broadwood for cavalry, and to Blunt for supplies. He had practically no staff, and did everything himself.

'Where is K.?' we used to say when we returned from some mission and found the Sirdar absent. 'He is gone nuzling,' Jemmy Watson would probably reply. With his eyes upon all the long line of communication to Lower Egypt, the Sirdar regulated, through Blunt and Rogers, the entire system of supply, and the *nuzl*, which was the dumping-ground of everything needed for the army, was his favourite haunt. Often before dawn I saw the tall figure rise from our bivouac under the mimosa trees and ride off silently into the dark, and it was long odds that he was off nuzling. Whoever among us was awake and watchful used to jump upon a horse and follow him, to be of what use we could, but I do not think that if no one had followed him it would have much mattered. He was self-sufficing, and verbal orders to the chief commanders and heads of departments were his manner of exercising command. He hated the written word, and how the ultimate historian will tell the story of certain phases of the reconquest of the Sudan I cannot tell. There is a story, and it may be true, that on one occasion when the army marched out furtively into the night on a sudden order, Colonel Walter Kitchener, the *mudir* of our transport,

an excellent officer but deaf, remained asleep during the flitting. He laid down in the midst of the army, and awakened to find himself alone with the vultures. It is quite possible. All things were possible in the desert and with K.

But if the Sirdar did not write or speak much, he used to think. I never knew a man who more visibly, continually, and deeply thought. The whole expedition was a complete picture in his mind. He was it. He sat there and pondered and thought it out. Then he would ride off, and visit some general or departmental chief and give his orders. These orders had to be obeyed, whether their execution were practicable or the reverse. The shifts and expedients used by all of us to carry out orders that seemed and almost were impracticable were innumerable, but the result was usually that the orders were obeyed. He was hard on men who failed him. He seldom took into account, or even inquired into, the reasons for a failure. The thing which he desired had to be done, and, less considerate than an insurance office, he did not take into account an act of God, such as a rainstorm which temporarily upset a telegraph line, or a spate on a cataract which wrecked a boat. His men had to succeed, and all knew it.

My Arabic was of the slightest, but the Sirdar was an accomplished Arabic scholar, and could speak to his own men and to deserters and prisoners in their patois, and with all the familiar clicks and clucks. He loved to talk by the hour with the dervish prisoners, and he generally turned them inside out. This faculty gave him an immense power of which he took full advantage. But he did not waste any time in courting popularity with anybody great or small. An officer of the Blues

came out with me to Cairo with an autograph letter from the Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward, asking K. to take the officer on his staff, and the letter was duly delivered. No answer was returned to it, and after waiting for many weeks the officer returned home, still without a word. K. was not such a great figure then as he became later, and I always thought that his independence in ignoring a request which most generals would have regarded as a command, was greatly to his credit, sorry though I was for my friend, who was an excellent officer and organiser.

The Sirdar hated functions, public speaking, and ceremonial or display of any kind. He would, for preference, have lived in a cloud of smoke, unnoticed by the world and his men. I never saw him look at or speak to a private soldier or take the slightest trouble to ingratiate himself with his troops. After the assault at the Atbara, the Colonels of the Seaforths and the Camerons came and begged me to induce K. to come and say a word to their men, who were perfectly mad with the excitement and joy of fighting and wanted to see the Sirdar and know what he thought of them. K. was almost querulous, and strongly resisted my appeal. I had almost to take hold of his bridle and drag him up, but he came at last, and he need not have worried, for he had hardly said a word before there was such a burst of frantic cheering that all speech-making was impossible. They knew that he was proud of them, and he knew that they had done well. There was no need for words, but only for his presence amongst them for a moment. Rarely, indeed, do British soldiers forget their imperturbable calm, and one may live many years, and see many campaigns, without witnessing a scene of such tremendous and tumultuous

enthusiasm as we saw after the Atbara fight. The men were mad with fighting, and I remembered the warning of the great Constable to the French King that 'the more the English see of blood, whether their own or the enemy's, the more terrible they are in the fight!'

K. was extraordinarily calm during the battle. He had very slight knowledge of tactics, which he left to Hunter and Gatacre. When I asked him a few days before the battle, how he proposed to attack, he replied that he had brought us 1500 miles into Africa and had fed us, and that he expected us to fight the battle for him. The formations adopted, I have already given. When Gatacre decided to place the Camerons in front line and to advance firing, we had to practise this advance, which was, I believe, never thought of before, or at least never practised to my knowledge. It worked all right, but what a comment on peace training that we should have begun to practise only a few days before the battle! To the best of my recollection, K. only issued three orders during the fight. When our guns drew out in front of our line to begin the bombardment, all the camels with the ammunition trooped out with them, and would have completely prevented the infantry behind them from using their rifles had the enemy attacked, and he was under 600 yards away. Mindful of other fights with the dervishes, I suggested that the camels should be brought back. This was done. His second order was to Gatacre to bring back his brigade to regain touch with the troops on his right, and this was inspired by the same thought, for the dervishes had sharp eyes for a gap in a line. The third and last order was to sound the 'Cease Fire.' As the troops rushed the defences, many dervishes remained concealed or shammed dead. They sprang up after the infantry had passed and began

firing at them from behind, whereupon people began to shoot at them from all parts of the field, indifferent about the ultimate billets of their bullets. This fusillade, which reminded me of cock-shooting in the west of Ireland, rose to a sort of *feu de joie*, when there emerged from the earth a mounted dervish who tried to gallop off and escape. Some of our men were hit by our own people, and I suggested the 'Cease Fire' to put a stop to it, wondering whether the 'Cease Fire' had ever been sounded on a battlefield before.

I rode round the *dem* with the Sirdar and Ned Cecil after the fight, while Jemmy Watson was counting the dead. It was a terrible sight with the corpses lying thick and in every conceivable attitude, one man with a heavy wooden yoke chained to him. At one point we reined up for K. to inspect a part of the position, when Ned Cecil touched me with his whip and pointed to the ground. There were shells littered about all round, and the grass was burning and smouldering under our horses' feet. Presently K. passed on and we followed. We had not gone far when we heard the sound of an explosion, and looking back, saw a column of smoke shooting up high into the air. A miss is as good as a mile, we thought, and supposed that destiny knew what it was about. K.'s hour had not then struck.

I was standing by the Sirdar on the ridge when the Emir Mahmud was brought before him by an escort of Sudanese. Mahmud was a big, brawny dervish. His feet were bare, and he had no headdress and no clothing visible except the usual jibba with its customary patches. He looked straight at the Sirdar and displayed no sign of fear. On the whole his demeanour seemed to say, 'I am as good a man as you.' The Sirdar told him to sit down. This is a well-understood order which

precedes an execution in the Sudan, and the proper attitude of contrition, appealing for mercy, is to kneel. Mahmud sat down cross-legged, which was the most insulting thing that he could do. A short conversation in Arabic took place, and I think that it has been correctly given by Mr. Churchill in his excellent book on *The River War*. Mahmud was marched off, and then the Sirdar, in the intervals of having his head sponged to relieve a headache, dictated to Wingate his despatch upon the battle. Later, he also telegraphed to Queen Victoria, with whom he maintained a regular correspondence. Her Majesty was always devoted to him, and he to her.

K. rewarded Gatacre for his share in the attack in a curious way. A horse belonging to some officer, and led by a syce, came past us laden up with spoils from the *dem*—swords, spears, chain-mail, and every sort of other weapon and curio. K. stopped the man and calmly proceeded to select the best of the spoil. When it came to selecting curios, there were few people in it with K. When he had done so, he turned to me and said, 'Ride to General Gatacre, give him these trophies with my compliments, and congratulate him from me on the very gallant manner in which he led his attack.' This I duly did, and Gatacre's eyes shone with pleasure. What the officer said, whose trophies were taken, can be left to the imagination. The Sirdar also gave me Osman Digna's standard, and I have it still.

Gatacre and Hunter were great Paladins at that time. There was rivalry between them, but the rivalry of gallantry. Both were as brave as lions. Both were fine and indefatigable horsemen. Gatacre was a man possessed of the most restless spirit imaginable. He was all on wires, and his lithe, active figure never felt

fatigue. He was dubbed Back-Acher on account of the hard work to which he set his brigade, and he insisted on the most rigid discipline and the most galling rules. He used to make speeches to the men after church on Sundays, and these were always a great draw, and we all came to hear what he had to say. I found him a most easy and courteous chief to deal with in most matters, and once, only once, I found him asleep and let him sleep on instead of giving him a message, as he had worked himself nearly to death. He was furious, afterwards, that I had caught him asleep at all. Hunter was a man of different mould. He was equally active, but more calm, and his judgment in all Sudan matters was very good. He excelled as a leader of troops, and he was always the first into a fight and the last out. Macdonald, Maxwell, Lewis, and Collinson were all good brigadiers, but all very different in their characters and capacities, while the British officers of the Egyptian Army I can only compare to the best of the white officers with the Indian Army. It was wonderful, the miracles which they had performed with their men, and while our British troops in the Sudan were beyond all praise, I thought highly of the Egyptian Army and of all parts of it. The Sudanese simply adored fighting.

One day when we were still on the Nile, Macdonald asked me to ride round, inspect the outposts, and tell him what I thought of them. I did so, and came back to tell Mac. that I did not think much of them, and that they were badly placed, and not in a position to protect us against surprise. Mac. grunted, and then asked me to ride out with him. We passed the outpost line, and some way beyond came upon a great body of the women of the Sudanese, who were hiding in the long grass and scrub, and formed a complete outer line of

observation. Mac. said that in case of attack all these women would raise such a devil of an outcry that it would be heard for miles, and that he wished for no better outposts. We laughed a good deal, and I had to admit that a more effective screen could not well be imagined. These women, and other women, followed the army everywhere—even on the march to Omdurman, I believe, though I did not see them then—and when they were refused permission to follow the army, they raised Cain, as the saying goes, sent deputations to the general, whoever he might be, and made speeches which put the case in a nutshell, but are not suitable for reproduction. They are supposed even to have made the brick-dust complexion of the Sirdar once show a blush, which must have been difficult. In advance of Berber one day I was with the Sirdar in the desert when we saw careering towards us a lot of horsemen and people who looked like dervishes. They turned out to be the headmen of Berber, who had come out to complain that all the women of Berber had followed the army, and to demand their restitution. There was a parley, and I did not inquire what had been decided, but perhaps the 500 dervish ladies whom Hickman brought back after the Shendy fight were part payment to the Berber gentry for their losses. Many odd things happened in the Sudan. I recall that K. used to occupy his spare time, when the gunboats were being put together, in going round and driving in rivets. He was not a skilled riveter, and it was the unwritten law for any one with him on these occasions to mark the K. rivets with a chalk cross, that they might be riveted afresh. But it would take a Jemmy Watson to tell all the good stories of this time. Jemmy always had some fitting word or 'Limerick' for every occasion.

When we were overwhelmed one day by a sandstorm followed by sheets of rain, and were struggling with coats, blankets, or waterproof sheets to get cover, Jemmy produced the following to cheer us up :

> There was a young man of Belgrade
> Who once bought a coat ready-made,
> When they said, does it fit? He replied, Not a bit!
> But consider the price that I paid!

My opinion is that a good, cheery humorist is worth more on a Headquarters Staff than a great deal of talent. The Court Jester of the Middle Ages must have been invented by a profound student of human nature. I have often longed for one upon a G.H.Q.

The worst time I went through in the Sudan was while the Sirdar was hesitating to attack Mahmud. I was on the rack lest he should escape if we did not strike at once, and was only half convinced by the Sirdar's assurance that he would fight, because, if he did not, he would never be able to face his women. Gatacre was also anxious to attack, but Hunter's advice at first was to wait, and on April 1 the Sirdar telegraphed to Cromer—and I am not sure whether any one saw the telegram before it went—saying that he was perplexed at the situation, quoting the opinion of his two generals, describing the situation, and asking for Cromer's views. After consulting Sir Francis Grenfell, Cromer replied on April 2 in a long telegram giving the reasons for and against attacking, and finally advising the Sirdar not to attack for the present. Wingate, Cecil, and I deciphered the telegram in the night by the light of a flickering candle, and I remember my feelings of rage and despair when we learnt what the advice was. But happily Hunter changed his opinion, and on April 3 the Sirdar so informed Lord Cromer, who there-

upon gave K. a free hand. But it was a very bad moment, and I shall never forget deciphering the Cromer telegram, which, with the others, is duly set out in his book on *Modern Egypt*. Even then the Sirdar did not at first like the most suitable date because it was a Friday. A happy thought struck me, and I said, 'But, sir, next Friday is *Good* Friday!' K. laughed and agreed. Friday turned out to be very good, and K. thought it a good day for him and fought Omdurman on a Friday too.

I thought that the Sirdar's practice of living with his staff and taking all his meals with them was a good one, and I found later in South Africa the disadvantages of the contrary course. We were a cheery party. Wingate was an ideal Intelligence Officer. His knowledge of the Sudan was extraordinary, and he was kept well informed of all proceedings over wide regions of North Africa. He was a mine of information, while Charles Long and Gallwey were great authorities in their own matters. Rawly was always alert and full of talk, and Jemmy Watson went through life laughing, and telling ridiculous stories. He was an excellent A.D.C. and a good rider. I wish that he may some day give us his recollections of Lord K.

When we were on horseback in the desert each horseman, as he galloped, left a long trail of dust behind him, which hung in the air for over a hundred yards. Therefore we rode wide of each other, and the Sirdar travelled at a pretty fast pace. He was always well mounted, and his erect, slim figure and fine seat on a horse gave him great distinction. Wingate we called The White Knight, from the number of articles which hung about him. He seemed to carry not only the Intelligence Office, but a *batterie de cuisine* and a larder at the same

time, but he was a good campaigning comrade and was always ready to share his supplies with the first comer. We bivouacked *à la belle étoile* and did pretty well for baths, as we were always near a river. The mess was set out on a little table, of which K. always took the head. We mostly drank Rosbach water in the Sudan, and a glass of port after dinner. We all spoke openly and frankly about everything, and by this means K. became well acquainted with all that was being said and done by the troops. It was a greater advantage to him than many can realise. A commander in the field, being omnipotent, is a lonely being, and stands on a pinnacle above and away from the rest. He often knows too little, and has not his hand upon the pulse of his army. To live in a mess with his staff is such an advantage that I should like to see the practice laid down in the Field Service Regulations.

Regulations and the Sudan were, however, I must admit, separated by a wide gulf owing to incompatibility of temper. When I became brigade-major in the last stage of the campaign, I received from home a stationery box which, on inspection, I found to be full of countless forms and returns which, had I kept and used them, would certainly have occupied my time for the greater part of each day, and had evidently been devised by some finicking people who lived at desks. I looked over the papers gloomily, and with thoughts that tended towards murder. The box was heavy and large, and every ounce was sure to tell. So I took out a few pieces of plain paper and some envelopes, and after setting the rest free to travel to London by the Nile and the Mediterranean, filled the box with sand and threw it overboard. But murder will out. Many years afterwards some sleuthhound of a clerk tracked me

down, and I received a letter from the War Office asking me to account for the box. The correspondence went on for quite a long time, and, to cut a long story short, I had to pay. But I had saved myself such an infinity of worry that I was quite contented to leave it at that.

We had one or two men fresh from home on K.'s staff during the Omdurman campaign, and they began the usual attempt to Europeanise us, but soon dropped it. One came out one day to boss Snow and me as we were about to lay out the points for our troops. He asked us if either of us had some scientific instrument or other—I forget its name—for laying out angles. I shouted out, 'No, but I have got a sardine-tin opener!' and Snow shouted, 'and I have got a box of Cockle's pills!' That finished it, and we were afterwards left in peace, but I must say that the disposition of the army in bivouac, and the constant shifting of the men after they had settled down, often aroused my fury. When Hunter laid out the square Gatacre wanted to alter it, and *vice versa*. I saw no point in the extreme overcrowding when we had the whole desert to work over, and I felt for the infantry who were constantly disturbed to move a few unnecessary yards. It was also hard to sleep in such a crush, but these things were the business of the top people, and as they willed it, so it was.

Our 2nd Brigade were, as I have said, considered greenhorns when they came up the river, but presently we got back a bit of our own. One day we were ordered to head the advance, and to go on to our next halting-place alone, the 1st Brigade following us later. The 1st Brigade staff came out to jeer, and asked us to leave messages for our friends as we were sure never to be seen again. We arrived in peace, but at dawn Wauchope

and Snow and their men had still not arrived, so Lyttelton, David Henderson, and I rode out as a search party to look for them. We could find no signs of them, but on ranging farther saw some infantry in the distance. We rode up to them, and I asked, 'Who the devil are you?' The answer came, 'Please, sir, we are the 1st Brigade rearguard!' 'Rearguard!' I said, 'but where is your main body?' 'We don't know, sir!' What had happened was that the 1st Brigade had marched out late, had lost its rearguard, and had halted to search for it. The rearguard had marched on, had missed the main body in the dark, had marched past it, and had finally given up its friends and had halted to wait for day. The remarks which we made about rearguards, when the 1st Brigade staff eventually turned up, may be left to the imagination. My offer to accept candidates for a course at a 2nd Brigade rearguard school was received with indignation. But the 1st Brigade teased us no more. We talked of rearguards whenever they began.

The reason why we got into a muddle, and Macdonald nearly got into something worse, when we marched south from El Egeiga on September 2, was that there was no distance named between the brigade echelons when we were ordered to advance. What K. then needed was a good infantry drill man, and he did not happen to have one. The 1st Brigade were rabid that we should go first, and as no distance had been named they marched upon our heels in spite of my protests. In our march up the Nile before the battle, we followed almost exactly the formations of the Emperor Julian's army on its march down the Euphrates as described by Gibbon. It was not imitation. It was mere accident. It was also a matter of common sense.

We saw the best of the dervishes in the fight, and the worst of them in their foul, rambling, wretched, preposterous capital. I do not think that the bravery of the dervishes could well be excelled, and we certainly conceived a great admiration for them as fighting men. But theirs was a terrible, wretched, and most degrading tyranny. It had depopulated the Sudan and created nothing but the military force—Prussianism and frightfulness. The aspect of Omdurman was past belief ; it was a forcing-house for diseases ; squalor and dirt predominated ; and it was amazing that religion should, from such unprepossessing material as Omdurman and its inhabitants, have created the fanaticism which impelled the dervishes to do and die as they did.

When we were all sorted out after the fight we had a service at Khartoum in memory of Charles Gordon. The remains of the lower part of the river front of the old Palace at Khartoum were still standing, and the stone staircase on which Gordon died. We were all taken there on the steamers, and on the top of the broken wall were rigged up two masts on which the British and Turkish flags were to be hoisted simultaneously, for the fiction of Turkish suzerainty still remained. The service was taken by a Church of England, a Roman Catholic, and a Presbyterian pastor, each of whom took a part in the prayers, while a Sudanese band played Gordon's favourite hymn, 'Lead, Kindly Light.' It was very simple, very solemn, and very touching. When it was all over I spoke to Kitchener under the great tree on the river front and congratulated him on the successful end of his long labours. He was very much changed ; the sternness and the harshness had dropped from him for the moment, and he was as gentle as a woman. He spoke in affecting

words of Gordon, and of the long years which had been spent in recovering the lost Sudan, and of all he owed to those who had assisted him. The lines of thought had gone out of his face. His manner had become easy and unconstrained. He was very happy. We wandered about in Gordon's garden, and at last had to tear ourselves away, but the place, the hour, and the memories of that great day can never fade. We looked back as the steamer bore us away, at the ruin, the great tree, the garden, and above all, the flag. There were not many words said that day. Our feelings were too deep for words, and scarcely a man spoke.

CHAPTER XI

BRUSSELS AND THE HAGUE

A FEW days after we reached Khartoum one of the gunboats, which had gone on reconnaissance up the Nile, returned with the astonishing information that she had been fired upon by a force led by white men and in possession of Fashoda. The Kaiser had been right. From the bullets imbedded in the vessel I had no difficulty in deciding that they were French, and realised from my past knowledge of the French Colonial Party that matters between us had come to a climax at last, and that a serious crisis had arisen.

Thanks to the Sirdar's cautious handling of the difficulties on the spot, local trouble was avoided, and decisions were left to the two home Governments by mutual consent. But we could not, obviously, after all our efforts, leave Commandant Marchand's expedition in control of the upper waters of the Nile. No one in England possibly, except Simpson, my old colleague at Queen Anne's Gate, appreciated better than I did the great feats accomplished by the French and Senegalese troops in Northern, Western, and Central Africa during a long series of years, but when our good neighbours appeared on the Nile and laid claim to a footing there, then we could not stand it, for he who controls the Nile controls Egypt, and we could not stretch altruism to such a point in favour of our French friends.

As I knew, or thought that I knew, more about French military resources at this time than anybody else, I determined to hurry home, and lost no time, when we had taken our troops down the river, in clearing up in Cairo and in flying home by the quickest route. I stopped at Paris on the way, saw Douglas Dawson, our Military Attaché, and took stock rapidly of the political situation which steadily grew worse. On reaching London I at once reported myself, and received my orders. In a few days I was off abroad, and there I remained with occasional journeys home until the crisis happily terminated without war. It was a very trying time for me. I cannot unfortunately describe all the strange experiences which I went through, the sources of my information, or my methods of work. I think that both nations owe a debt of gratitude to the statesmanship of that period which did not permit itself to utter dangerous words, and succeeded during an uncommonly ticklish time in maintaining the good relations which have since grown into the great alliance of the two neighbouring peoples.

I will only recount one little episode of those secret service days. One of my agents belonged to a Latin race. He turned up at my headquarters one day and, after making his report, began to hum and haw and finally said that he had a proposal to make to me. I told him to fire ahead. He then said that he belonged to a secret society whose speciality was to get rid of inconvenient people, and that if I had any political or personal enemies, his society would guarantee to dispose of them at the rate of fifty louis a head. It was rather sudden, as the girl says in the play, and I replied that the proposal was most enticing, but that so many names came into my mind that I felt that I was in

danger of being recklessly extravagant. Would he give me time to think it over and make the selection? He kindly consented, and I took the earliest opportunity of ridding myself of this enterprising but bloodthirsty individual. In our time we have replaced the good old system of private assassination by that of the Press. On the whole the former was more humane, less cowardly, and not so lingering.

Soon afterwards it was decided to appoint a Military Attaché in Belgium and the Netherlands, and I was offered and accepted the post. France, Germany, and other States had long been represented by officers in these countries, but our political interest in them had cooled owing to our manifold anxieties elsewhere, and I found a *tabula rasa* so far as military information was concerned when I reached these countries. The British Ministers under whom I served at Brussels were first Sir Francis Plunkett and then Sir Constantine Phipps, while at The Hague Sir Henry Howard represented England during my tour of duty. Arthur Raikes was at the head of the Chancery in Brussels, and there were various other secretaries, including Ronald Macleay, of whom I saw most, while at The Hague Arthur Leveson-Gower and Lord Granville were those whom I remember best. They were all extremely nice people, and our relations were always most cordial. There were always a good many English people in Brussels, some resident, and some on passage, and our diplomatists in other parts of Europe frequently turned up at the Belgian capital. There was consequently quite a gathering of British at the Legation in the Rue de Spa very often, and there were many foreigners of note who also came, in addition to the *corps diplomatique* and the Court officials.

Russia was then represented by M. de Giers, Germany by Count Alvensleben, France by M. Gervais, Italy by the Marquis Imperiali, afterwards Ambassador in London, Austria by Count Khevenhuller, Spain by M. Villa-Urrutia, who also came on to London with his wife who was so much admired, and there were many secretaries, like M. Sevastopoulo of the Russian Legation, who have since held important posts. An officer of merit, Colonel Haillot, whom I had often met in France, was now French Military Attaché in Brussels, and we saw much of each other. My German colleague was Colonel von Leipzig, and I was much attached to him and his charming wife. Colonel Muller, the Russian Military Attaché, and his wife were also nice people, and Muller himself was an officer of considerable attainments, who constantly came to know my opinions on certain subjects, and we had many interesting conversations about matters and countries where British and Russian interests conflicted. At The Hague I saw much of M. Bihourd, the French Minister, who afterwards went to Berlin as Ambassador, while the German Minister was Count von Pourtalès, whose wife gave pleasant parties, and in the German Legation was also Herr von Jagow, who was Minister for Foreign Affairs at the outbreak of the Great War. Among the secretaries at the Austro-Hungarian Legation I knew best Count Forgach, who was subsequently Minister in Serbia, where he got into trouble, but he reappeared later at the Austrian Foreign Office and played some part in the opening and other moves of the war. I spent much of my time with him, and together we often went out to Clingendael, the de Brienens' delightful house near The Hague, where we were always made most welcome.

M. de Favereau was Foreign Minister of Belgium, and a very courteous and agreeable man. General Cousebant d'Alkemade was War Minister in the Government of M. de Smeth de Naeyer, and I saw a good deal of him. The Nestor of Belgian diplomacy was Baron Lambermont, an extraordinarily shrewd and wise old gentleman, who taught me a great deal about Belgian politics and was a staunch admirer of England, as well as a G.C.B., of which fact he was very proud. It was he, I think I may say, who instructed Prince Albert of Belgium, afterwards King, and one of the heroes of the Great War, in all that related to diplomacy, and it would have been difficult to discover a more sagacious guide. The Prince and Princess Charles de Ligne, and Baron Lambert and his wife were amongst the Belgians who gathered round them the best diplomatic society, and I recall particularly the Papal Nuncio, who was the greatest figure on these occasions and enjoyed a privileged position, not only because of his office, but from his personal distinction. I saw a good deal of Prince Victor Napoleon, who afterwards married Princess Clementine of Belgium, and his home in the Avenue Louise was a treasure-house of Napoleonic relics, and possessed a wonderful library of all the Napoleonic period. Here were the grey coat and cocked hat of the great Napoleon, the watch which he carried at Marengo, the sword of Frederick the Great, and countless relics either belonging to the Bonapartes or bequeathed to them by adherents. The de Caraman-Chimays were also most hospitable people, and Countess Ghislaine de Caraman-Chimay was subsequently *dame d'honneur* to the present Queen and accompanied her to the front during the war. Lady Alice Reyntiens amongst the English, Countess Tolstoi among the

Russians, and Mrs. Townshend, wife of the United States Minister, among the Americans, were among the other hostesses of whom we saw most, and with Mrs. Townshend there often stayed the beautiful Countess Fabbricotti, who was much admired.

I arrived at the time of year of the Court functions, and was duly presented to King Leopold in Brussels and to the Queen of the Netherlands at The Hague. The King was not a favourite in England, nor, I think, at our Court. King Leopold wrote regularly by the F.O. Bag every week to Queen Victoria to maintain the family connection, and Prince Albert was a regular visitor to our shores, occupying himself largely with maritime and commercial interests. But England generally did not understand the vital importance of the preservation of Holland and Belgium from German conquest or infiltration by pacific means.

On the whole, we thought at the Legation that Belgium was not well treated by us in her Congo affairs. King Leopold, by his own brain and his activity alone, had carved out a sphere of influence for his subjects in Central Africa, without army, navy, or diplomacy to help him much, and he endeavoured to secure this heritage for his laborious people against the rivalry of the great Powers in Africa. We gave him and his people no friendly hand, and there soon began the campaign against Belgian atrocities which naturally alienated opinion in Belgium from us. I wonder, looking back, whether Roger Casement, subsequently hanged for rebellion, was really a dispassionate and uninspired observer when he came to Brussels before proceeding to the Congo, and was handed over to me to show round the authorities in Brussels before he started on his mission. Was he even then a German agent, and was there any deeper

design, connected with European politics, in the wind ? I do not know, but Casement was a tall and attractive man with pleasant manners, whom we took entirely at his face value when he descended on us, and we certainly had no suspicion that he was anything other than an honest official who desired to find out the truth.

The King one evening made me the depositary of his complaints against England. I had been dining with him, and of the others present I only recall his daughter, Princess Clementine, a graceful and charming lady whose conversation always interested me. After dinner I was talking with the King when he suddenly opened a tirade against England apropos of the famous Lado conclave, which was at that time a bone of contention, and proceeded for nearly an hour to recount point by point all his grievances against the diplomacy of our Foreign Office. He was very fluent, and knew every move in the game from first to last. When he had finished he asked me to recount the whole of his statement to my Government, and the thought flashed through my mind that it was extremely long and difficult to reproduce, and that any deviation from the text might create difficulties. So I replied in this sense and asked the King whether he would give me a copy of his communication in writing. He looked surprised, but, after a moment's hesitation, asked me to come and see him again the following day. This I did, and when he saw me he pulled out of his gold-embroidered coat-tails a long manuscript and handed it to me. I read it on my return home, and found, to my surprise, that it was a faithful word-for-word reproduction of his conversation. Afterwards I asked Count John d'Oultremont what had happened after I left, and was told

that the King had called his secretary and had dictated the conversation word for word, a feat of memory and of reporting of which I do not recall the like.

Cecil Rhodes came to Brussels when I was there, in order to try and arrange with the King about the Cape-to-Cairo railway. Rhodes dined at the Legation and was in his best form, describing to us many of his plans, and laying stress upon the wealth of Johannesburg and Kimberley and upon the great prospects in sight for South Africa. Next day he and I lunched with the King, and Colonel Thys was there with a few others. The King always preferred to speak in French, but found Rhodes obdurate, though I believe that he could speak French quite well. As we were going in, a thought occurred to me, and I asked Rhodes if he had his own map. He half pulled it out of his coat pocket, and smiling, said, 'Yes, I thought of that, and shall bring it away with me!' He and the King retired and were alone. The two finest brains that have ever dealt with Africa endeavoured to come to an agreement. But they failed. For once Cecil Rhodes had met his match, and he came out saying, 'Satan! I tell you he 's Satan!' and was furious at his failure to come to terms.

I divided my time between Belgium and Holland, and of the two preferred the latter, because there was decidedly more affinity between Dutch and English ways; there was a good club where one could get and give an excellent dinner and have capital whist, and the whole problem of the defence of the Netherlands interested me deeply. The dear little doll's-house capital of The Hague was a place that grew upon one, and so did the people as one learnt to know and appreciate their sterling qualities. Most people spoke English,

French, and German, so that inability to speak Dutch was not the difficulty that I expected. The Legation was a most pleasant and popular centre, and the Howards and their family were much liked by everybody. In the summer we had Scheveningen and the bathing, while all the old cities and towns of the Netherlands, with their history and their art treasures, were as great a fascination as their people. I was present at the marriage of Queen Wilhelmina and Prince Henry, and visited the Loo, which reminded me of an old country house in England. I attended manœuvres, and on one occasion we had a ceremony when the centenary of 1799 came round, and the Military Attachés of the combatants of that year—Dutch, French, English, and Russian—deposited wreaths on the graves of the fallen and made speeches in their memory.

One day, at the Dutch manœuvres, fate did me a good turn. I was riding a black horse that had never been lame in its life, and suddenly it fell as lame as a tree and I got off to discover the reason. I could find nothing wrong. I was due to meet my colleagues at a certain rendezvous where a motor-car—then in its infancy—was waiting for us. It would take me half an hour's fast trotting to be in time, and if I walked home leading my horse I had a long, hot, and dusty walk in front of me. But horse-love compelled me to walk the horse home. On arrival I found that our Dutch guide, a Baron and a captain in the army, the chauffeur, and my German and Russian colleagues had got into the motor which had run away downhill and had dashed into a stone wall, every one in the car except Colonel Muller, who had thrown himself down on the bottom of the car, being killed or cut to bits. I wired

to my Minister, who was with King Edward aboard his yacht at Flushing. Queen Alexandra read the telegram. She was a horse-lover, and said the hardest things about the folly of using such horrible conveyances as motor-cars.

I used to attend the *séances* of the Chamber of Representatives in Brussels, occasionally also of the Senate, and of the States-General at The Hague, in order to study politics. The Belgian Parliament was run on French lines and I heard many fine speeches. There sat the implacable M. Woeste, who with his Old Catholics so long obstructed, and finally postponed till too late, the military organisation of Belgium on modern lines. There were great oratorical jousts, in which M. Émile Vandervelde, then leader of the Socialists, took a brilliant part, and I observed that the Socialist Party, instead of pursuing shadows as they then did with us, were gradually shaping to become a party of government. In the States-General it was a much more patriarchal affair. Members often gathered round a speaker as they would in a club, and the member for Schiedam once kissed his hand to me from the floor of the house. The debates were interminable, and never seemed to lead to anything in particular. M. de Beaufort was Foreign Minister and was very agreeable. Baron Michiels was a man I trusted and liked, and among the younger men Jack Bylandt, who met his death by accident on a run at St. Moritz, I liked very much. But most of my time was given up to a study of the two armies and national defence. Lord Methuen years before had advised me, if ever I became a Military Attaché, as he had been at Berlin, and if I was asked to obtain certain information, to go straight and ask for it in the proper quarter, and not try to ferret it out

for myself. I found this excellent advice, and always followed it. The War Office overwhelmed me with subjects for reports, mainly of a technical character, and the two War Offices in Brussels and The Hague were always most courteous and took great pains to answer all my questions. I would never do any secret service work. My view is that the Military Attaché is the guest of the country to which he is accredited, and must only see and learn that which is permissible for a guest to investigate. Certainly he must keep his eyes and ears open and miss nothing, but secret service is not his business, and he should always refuse to take a hand in it. An ambitious young officer revels in secrets and secret information out of sheer keenness, but he is sure to get into a mess if he indulges in it. It is quite common for agents to be sent to a new Military Attaché in order to tempt and test him, or for letters to be sent to him offering him important information on payment. These things should be avoided like the plague. Secret service is a necessity at times, but a Military Attaché should steadily refuse to have anything to do with it.

In 1899 there assembled at The Hague, at the suggestion of the Emperor of Russia, the first Peace Conference, and I was instructed to take part in it as technical delegate with General Sir John Ardagh. Lord Pauncefote was at the head of our mission, with Sir Henry Howard as his supporter, and Admiral Sir John Fisher, afterwards Lord Fisher, took the lead in naval affairs. We had a very competent staff of secretaries, including Richard Maxwell and Ronny Hamilton, and we all put up at the Hôtel des Indes, which became our headquarters throughout the Conference. Many of the statesmen and diplomatists who were most in view came

at the head of their respective missions. M. Bourgeois represented France, Count Munster Germany, Mr. White the United States, Count Welsersheimb Austria, Jonkheer van Karnebeek Holland, Baron de Staal Russia, Count Nigra Italy, and M. Beernaert Belgium. All the States of the world were represented, and there were included in the various missions many statesmen, sailors, and soldiers of distinction who are still in harness and have been concerned in some of the great events of our time, as well as great pundits of international law such as Professors de Martens of Russia and Renault of France. Our place of meeting was the House in the Wood, a few minutes' walk from The Hague, where the gorgeous cartoons of Jordaens looked down upon us all when we were assembled for a *séance plénière*, and the locality was well adapted for our purpose as there were enough rooms to enable the various committees to meet.

We duly set to work to formulate in written agreements, so far as we could, the beneficent and wholly commendable ideals of the Tsar. We broke up into committees, each of which had to deal with some particular part of the programme, and all through the hot summer of that year we worked steadily on, making-believe that the passions and ambitions of mankind were at an end, and that people who had set their names to agreements would keep them. I will say this for the Conference of 1899, that it was thoroughly well-intentioned, and that if certain Powers made mental reservations, these did not appear at the time, except on one occasion in the case of Germany. Ideas were formulated for the pacific settlement of international disputes which, had a real desire to keep the peace then and afterwards been entertained by everybody, would

have brought about the millennium, while we laid down rules for the laws and customs of war on land, under which war, if and when it came, would have been fought with more regard for the rights of non-combatants and with more courtesy and chivalry than ever before. Lord Salisbury, in his instructions to our mission, had left us a wide latitude which we much appreciated, and no one more than Lord Pauncefote distinguished himself at this time in following out to its logical conclusion the generous initiative of the Tsar.

It was something more than a *succès d'estime* that the First Peace Conference should have brought all the States of the world to sign the five agreements of 1899, but as I look back upon those agreements, and upon others which followed at subsequent Conferences, I am struck by the vanity of human wishes and am filled with gloomy thoughts. I think that these agreements were acts of good faith, and represented the consensus of the opinion of the most respectable people of the world. Yet every agreement, and almost every article of every agreement, were deliberately, continually, and of malice aforethought, broken by Germany in the Great War, although she had set her name to them all, as she had to the treaty which guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium.

I am not going to describe these agreements, or all the heavy work which we went through in the committees, and on the drafting committees, until they were in order. They make me tired. Love's labour was quite lost. But as, some day, nations may reassemble and try to pick up the pieces of international law and solder them together again, I shall jot down a few of the leading impressions which I received and the conclusions which I formed upon this deeply interesting occasion.

I do not believe in agreements to limit armaments. We were, as I have said, very well-intentioned in 1899, and we approached the question of limitation of armaments with a sincere desire to formulate a working agreement on the subject. We were unable to find one. We were met on all sides by technical difficulties. On what basis should the limitation affect, for instance, armies? Should the limitation rest on a basis of population? If it did, then the British Empire, Russia, China, and America would dominate the rest of the world, and the smaller the State the less military force could she maintain though she might well need the greatest. If the basis taken were wealth, area, or extent of frontiers, similar difficulties arose, while certain States rule over immense alien populations where the limitation of armed force could not remain subject to Procrustean rules. Supposing that some genius overcame these difficulties, should we limit guns and rifles? If we did, then the gnawing fear would eat at the heart of people that their rivals were secretly accumulating war material, and an international control would be the logical course and would be an infringement on sovereignty, besides a certain cause of offence to the State distrusted. If we did not limit war material, then an aggressive and ambitious nation might make its guns and rifles secretly and appear suddenly in the field with armies, perhaps untrained, but so well armed that they were sure to prevail. If we limited armies we must also limit navies, and then were we to take tonnage, length, breadth, guns, armour, torpedoes, or what as our standard of comparison, and should we not have the same difficulties of control, and the same risk from interfering with the affairs of other people? These difficulties appeared to us in 1899 to

be insuperable, and the limitation of armaments, after we had searched for a working formula in every direction, to be impracticable. As for the other twaddly agreements about not firing shells containing asphyxiating gases, not discharging projectiles and explosives from balloons, not using expanding bullets, and renouncing the use of explosive projectiles under a certain weight, I thought them all silly at the time, and all these scraps of paper followed others into the waste-paper basket when the Great War came.

Was unfortunate humanity never then to know the end of the scourge of war ? That was another matter. I thought that obligatory arbitration was the best means to bring about gradually the cessation of war, and to entail disarmament automatically if it were accepted. The obstacle which we encountered at The Hague was the reservation about 'honour and vital interests' which, if added to an agreement to arbitrate obligatorily, virtually made the agreement useless. Also there is this to be said that some nations have all they want, and, having the champion belt, do not want others to challenge for it, least of all young and active competitors who are certainly not anxious to tie themselves down to remain diminutive for ever. Very likely the nations of the world have not yet reached such a state of grace as to accept compulsory arbitration. As even Lord Pauncefote failed to complete his treaty in this sense with the United States, entirely owing to American opposition, we can see how hard a thing it will be for the rest of the world to consent to it. All the same, my conclusion was in 1899, and I have not changed it since, that obligatory arbitration is the royal road to general pacification and disarmament, and that attention should be concentrated

upon this point and not upon impracticable and petty plans such as some of those which we examined at The Hague.

This Peace Conference was, for me, a fine opportunity for studying and taking note of the diplomatists of the world, and I watched them all closely and formed certain opinions about them. In 1899 our long rivalry with France in the Colonial domain had come to a close, while Germany, thanks to the Kaiser's telegram to President Kruger at the time of the Jameson raid, had, for the first time in history, posed as our rival. I found that all the French mission worked with us very cordially, and never for a moment tried to snatch any advantage from us. But Germany, on the other hand, through her Military Commissioner, Colonel Gross von Schwarzhoff, scarcely concealed her dislike of the whole of the proceedings. She did not wish to be isolated, and so kept with the rest of the team, and signed everything as though she were a good European, but her real opinions shone out in von Schwarzhoff's speech at a full meeting of the Conference, when he showed plainly that Germany would have nothing to do with any limitation of armaments, and that it was incorrect to suppose that she was suffering from them since her wealth and the standard of living were constantly rising.

Schwarzhoff was a dangerously clever and determined man, a Prussian to the core, and utterly contemptuous in his heart of the futilities upon which we were engaged. He was a good speaker, highly trained, and would have made a greater War Minister than Roon. He accompanied the expedition to China as Chief of Staff to Waldersee, and extremely unpleasant he made himself. He died tragically in China, through going back to fetch

his dog from a burning house, and in the same expedition Germany also lost Colonel Yorck von Wartenburg, whom I coupled with Schwarzhoff as the two best German officers of the time. I asked Schwarzhoff, at the end, to sum up the Conference in a phrase, and he replied, 'Mon cher, c'est une blague!' Fifteen years later Germany showed, by all her acts and deeds, how great a *blague* it was in her eyes.

Towards the close of the Conference, which ended with mutual congratulations and expressions of good-will, there was a great deal of lobbying for the purpose of obtaining, for this representative or that, decorations of various kinds. Neither we nor the Americans took any part in this business, and I think that we are both at some disadvantage for not having at our command the gift of ribbons and baubles to gratify the perfectly insatiable vanity of poor human nature. It was a steeplechase for decorations, and I should recommend, on similar occasions, that we should use this simple, inexpensive, and most efficacious means of ingratiating ourselves with the artless medal-hunters, whose good-will in the end depends very largely upon this form of recognition of their merits.

An attempt was made one day to spring upon us an expression of opinion upon naval war and bombardments. I was alone of our delegation on a drafting committee when this happened, and I fancy that there had been an intrigue to bring the matter up. All the members spoke on the subject, and when it came to my turn I said that I had no instructions to deal with the subject, which was obviously *ultra vires*, since we were met to discuss the laws and customs of war *on land* and not at sea. They were angry with me, but my case was unassailable, and I would have

THE REAL LADY HAMILTON.

(From a miniature given by her to the author's grandmother.)

nothing to do with an obvious attempt to fetter our naval arm. In a subsequent Conference we allowed our neck to be put into this noose, and a nice mess we made of it.

Admiral Mahan was the United States Naval representative at the Conference, and I was very pleased to make his acquaintance. He was extremely good at the discussions, and I had many long talks with him on naval matters, generally alone, but sometimes with Admiral Fisher, whose cheery manners were a great asset to the gathering. Mahan was then writing the *Life of Nelson*. I saw him one day in church kneeling very devoutly on his knees on a stone floor, and thought to myself, Poor Lady Hamilton ! So it turned out, for he gave her no mercy, and was incapable of understanding that side of Nelson. We had all the Pacifist preachers over to The Hague in turn, from the Bishop of Hereford downwards, but the greatest success of all was Brooke Lambert, Vicar of Greenwich, to whom my father had presented the living of Tamworth in former days. Brooke Lambert startled the congregation by taking as his text, 'And there was war in Heaven,' and he went on to tell us that life was a continual struggle of good against evil, and that the idea that war and human passions could be banished from the world was Utopian. He was the only true prophet, but the Pacifists naturally banned him with bell, book, and candle, and called him Balaam for his pains. William Stead, the peace enthusiast, was at The Hague all the time. One day I sat next to him at dinner, and he told me the whole story of his 'Modern Babylon' articles, and of his sufferings and imprisonment. He was an honest man, and believed what he said, which is always something.

All this time our quarrel with Paul Kruger had been steadily becoming more embittered. I was too busy to follow the details, but as I had received a Brevet and two mentions in despatches for the Sudan I knew that I should be all right in the next war whenever it came. Lord Salisbury hated the idea of war with the South African Dutch, shook his head gravely over the idea of fighting 'a Teutonic enemy,' and grieved that one of the results would certainly be that the Queen of the Netherlands would wed a German Prince, as indeed happened. In September I was with the Dutch Army on manœuvres when I received a telegram ordering me to join the Headquarters Staff of the Expeditionary Force at Southampton on October 14, and my health was drunk that night by the Dutch Army without their knowledge that I had an order in my pocket to go abroad and fight Dutchmen. I was very uneasy on the subject of our subsequent relations with Holland when the war began, but the situation that evening was a little relieved when the Dutch drank the health of my good American colleague, and the Dutch band struck up 'Yankee Doodle' as the American hymn. My American colleague nearly died of apoplexy in his vexation, but we spent a happy evening afterwards without the telegram burning a hole in my jacket. I had come to The Hague from one war, had signed on for the millennium, and now departed for another war. Whatever else life was, it was certainly not dull.

As I have now arrived at the South African period, I insert another letter from the German Emperor to my uncle, Sir Edward Sullivan. It shows the Emperor's point of view about the Jameson raid :—

'BERLIN, 3.2.96.

'DEAR SIR EDWARD,—Count Metternich who returns to London to assist at poor Henry's funeral by order of H.M. showed me your kind letter you wrote him after my birthday.

'I am and was the whole time perfectly certain that like you all clearheaded Englishmen do not fall upon me and think and speak as the greater part of your press has spoken. The explosion of hostility also in higher circles has taken everybody by surprise here; the scurrilous way in which my person was attacked deeply wounded the German feeling *et la riposte à eté forte.* I of course mused much about this unexpected turn affairs had taken and fancy I found one of the reasons. Your society people and others do not know that for the last two years Transvaal and the German interests there have been the cause of very intense political correspondence between Downing Street and Berlin. Over and over again it has been shown that the large amount of German Capital in Transvaal (over 300 millions) and nearly 20,000 German inhabitants had to be respected and were to be looked after from here. This Downing Street never quite acknowledged. Your people not knowing these precedents took my dispatch for a nasty slap from somebody who *seemed* their friend till now. Whereas it was the thankful outcry that our men and money had been saved from loss and ruin! the more so as your Government and mine are and were quite *d'accord* about what to think of Jameson and his marauders. After all the commandment "Thou shalt not steal" is also written for Britons as well as for other people?! Never did I *fancy* that Englishmen and lots of *officers* were among the people

who *refused to obey H.M. commands* to *return*! I thought that it was a pack of golddigers, who generally are known as the scum of all nations! This is as a little *aperçu* for you! Knowing how you doat on your daughter I send you a picture of me and mine, with best wishes for your health and compliments to Lady Sullivan and daughter.—I remain, yours most faithfully, WILLIAM.'

CHAPTER XII

SOUTH AFRICA

I LEFT my post for England towards the end of September, and on arrival suggested that I should go to Aldershot to become acquainted with the plans and organisation of the expedition, of which General Sir Redvers Buller had been given the command. Kiggell, afterwards Chief of Staff to Sir Douglas Haig in France in 1916 and 1917, and I were the two D.A.A.G.'s on the Headquarters Staff, and I thought it natural that we should be made acquainted with the projects of the War Office and of our commander.

I had strong reasons for wishing to know what was being done and planned. We had no General Staff in those days, but only the Mobilisation and Intelligence divisions. I knew that Mobilisation, which had been carefully worked out, would be all right, and I hoped that Intelligence would be satisfactory, but there was no Operations Branch and no Chief of the General Staff to take hold of the facts and work out a proper plan of campaign. Wolseley was a great man, but as no one man could cumulate all the functions of a modern General Staff, I feared that we might find some plan in project which would merely represent an individual and not a fully matured conception of war. We were about to operate in hostile territory which, Cape Colony apart, was from north to south as far as from Berlin to Marseilles, and as broad as

Europe from Paris to Vienna. We knew that the Boers could fight well, and, as a member of the Headquarters Staff, I thought it was my business to be informed of what we were in for. The authorities did not so will it, and consequently, when I joined the *Dunnottar Castle* and steamed out of Southampton on October 14, 1899, I was completely ignorant about our forces and those of the enemy, of our plans, and of the thousand other matters which a Headquarters Staff officer should know about a country and a people against whom his nation and his General propose to make war.

The study of South Africa had not come my way in my previous experiences, and therefore it was true that I could not bring any practical knowledge of the country into the common stock. But all the more I wanted to learn and to obtain all the latest information, and was considerably put out at not getting it. We embarked on a dull, drizzly day. There was a large crowd on the quay which cheered itself hoarse as we cast off, and standing above the rest was a big, red-faced Englishman who shouted 'Remember Majuba' in a strident and penetrating voice, time after time, till we were out of hearing. He need not have worried. We soon had Majubas of our own. Sir Archibald Hunter, who was nominally Chief of the Staff, was already in Natal and so was not with us, but Wynne, Miles, Charles Douglas, Pole-Carew, Kiggell, Freddy Gordon, Girouard, Stopford, and Buller's personal staff were all on board, with Winston Churchill and many others too numerous to mention.

I learnt a few things during the voyage, but not much. The Transvaal and Free State Boers between them were expected to place in the field some 53,000

men, mostly mounted, and rifles were known to be available for this number. There was a varied assortment of guns ranging from 6 inches, throwing a 94-lb. shell, to the Vickers-Maxim automatic guns, subsequently christened pom-poms from the peculiar noise made by the explosion of the string of 1-lb. shells which they fired. We expected some rebels and foreigners to join the enemy, and not all the Boers to be in the field at one time. We were being followed by a complete Army Corps of three divisions, commanded by Lord Methuen and Generals Clery and Gatacre respectively, by a cavalry division under General French, a battalion of mounted infantry, and by four battalions for lines of communication. There were 10,000 men already in South Africa, and more troops from India were bound for Natal, where Sir George White was in command. Our troops from home numbered 47,000 men in all. We had, in short, about 60,000 men, mainly without horses, to fight 60,000 mainly with horses, and while our numbers were aggregate figures, those of the Boers were practically all combatants. However, the Army Corps and the Cavalry Division embarked between October 20 and November 15, and by December 4 all had been safely landed in South Africa.

But in the interval much had happened. We had some news of events at Madeira, but afterwards had none. The weather was tempestuous. We were seventeen days on the voyage and met scarcely a ship, but one day a whale came near us, lashing the seas, and apparently attacked, and much embarrassed, by some small enemies who were numerous and persistent, a fitting omen of what was to follow. A few days out from Cape Town we met a ship and veered to starboard

to speak her. She displayed a large black board aft, on which were chalked the words 'Three battles. Boers defeated.' Wireless was not then in use, and more we could not learn; but the message, though at the time received with cheers, caused some disquiet lest we and the Army Corps behind us should arrive too late. We need not have worried. These battles included Talana and Elandslaagte, but the day we reached Table Bay, October 30, Nicholson's Nek took place, and White lost a battle outside Ladysmith, after which he fell back upon the town. On that dripping evening in Table Bay officers came aboard and read us out the bad news in the rain on deck and half in darkness. Many of our friends had been killed, and we realised that, with the last of the Army Corps still a month behind, we had been forestalled by the initiative of the Boers.

We went alongside the quay on October 31, and landed amidst the enthusiasm of the inhabitants. But since we left England the whole situation had changed, and Buller was confronted with a position of affairs which was altogether detestable, and became worse with each succeeding day. White, as things turned out, had deliberately, and contrary to all the teaching of military history as I read it, accepted investment at Ladysmith by November 3 with Buller's acquiescence, and had not only to be reinforced but relieved. Natal was at the mercy of any surplus of Boers who remained over from the investing circle. The Free Staters were threatening to cross the Orange River into Cape Colony at half a dozen places where we had nothing but a few police. Many districts in the Colony were expected to revolt and join them when they came. Mafeking and Kimberley were cut off, and on the point of being invested or besieged. All over Cape Colony a mass of

ox transport, which was being laboriously and slowly collected for the service of the Army Corps, was wandering about entirely unprotected. We had scarcely any troops in Cape Colony, and the last of the Army Corps would not arrive for another month. Situation for situation, it could not have been much worse if the devil had had a hand in it. Perhaps he had.

The staff, putting a good face on affairs, and bluffing prodigiously, set to work to prepare for the reception and forward movement of the Army Corps on its arrival. It was hard work, and not made easier by the fact that plans constantly changed with varying conditions from day to day, while the Headquarters Staff was itself drained to find officers to command at threatened points. Pole-Carew went in one direction, Douglas in a second, Miles in a third. Hunter was shut up in Ladysmith, and, though French got out by the last train and happily joined us to render priceless service at Colesberg later on, the Headquarters Staff was whittled down to Wynne, Kiggell, Gordon, and myself, with Girouard for railways, Bridge for transport, and Richardson for supplies.

With meagre and hastily raised forces, Baden-Powell at Mafeking and Kekewich at Kimberley withstood the foe. Our small garrisons at Naauwpoort and Stormberg were ordered by Buller to fall back to De Aar and Queenstown, but we held on, fortunately, to Orange River Station. Captain Scott and the *Terrible* were sent round by Admiral Chichester, always a real friend in need, to organise the defences of Durban, and as the Army Corps began at last to arrive it was broken up and parts of it thrown in wherever they were most needed, under compulsion of events. It was a case of *courir au plus pressé*, and we lived from hand to mouth

in those bad days because we had no other way of living. The 2nd Infantry Brigade of Methuen's division was sent on to Natal without landing at Cape Town. The artillery of the 1st Division followed it, and one of Gatacre's brigades, the 6th. Methuen, with his Guards brigade, and other troops in the garrisons, were directed on Kimberley. Gatacre, with a part of one brigade and odd troops available, together with French and his cavalry division, had to guard the whole Cape Colony front from Orange River station to Aliwal North. Clery was sent to take command in Natal south of the Tugela, and one of his brigades, the 4th, due to disembark at Port Elizabeth, was diverted to follow him. About half the Army Corps was soon in or on the way to Natal, and the rest were scattered along the borders of Cape Colony to make head as best they might against the Free State Boers, who were already over the border with the rebels scattering flowers in their path.

During the month of November, in addition to my ordinary duties, I prepared a plan of defence of Cape Town and began to raise a regiment of Uitlanders. There were many of the latter in Cape Town who had not been able to join the Imperial Light Horse when it was formed in Natal, and at a luncheon which I gave one day, the idea of a regiment was raised and enthusiastically received. I obtained Buller's approval of the proposal, took Charles Villiers of the Blues from the Censor's office to help me to form it, and in a very short time a great number of recruits had passed through our hands, the best only being taken, and I had christened the regiment the South African Light Horse. We took the pick of the recruits, the only conditions being that a man should be able to ride and shoot, and should be

physically fit. We took fine young fellows from every mail boat that arrived, and we took Texas cowboys who turned up with mules from New Orleans. The scorn in the look of the cowboys when I asked them if they could ride was worth seeing. But there was a mare at our depôt which no one could ride. She would go like a sheep and then suddenly begin to behave like a snake, bucking and twisting in the air until she not only unshipped her rider but got rid of her saddle and bridle too. She was a great abater of cowboy pride. 'Well, I did expect, captain, that the tackle would hold,' said one cowboy ruefully as he rose from the ground amidst the derisive shouts of previous victims. As I had much other work, the credit of organising the regiment was due to Villiers, until Sir Redvers gave it to Julian Byng of the 10th Hussars, who completed the work and commanded the regiment very well. It was a mighty fine regiment, and would have been better had I been allowed to form behind it the depôt I asked for to keep up its strength. It received its baptism of fire at Colenso, when three squadrons endeavoured to storm Hlangwane, 1000 miles away, within five weeks of enlisting the first recruit, and all through the war it performed signal good service. I could have formed three or four such regiments had I been allowed, so far as men and horses were concerned, but the S.A.L.H. were only authorised as a concession, not as a need, and Buller wigged me soundly for taking Villiers, because he had been one of the Jameson raiders, who were detested by the Chief. Also I must say that rifles, transport, and equipment were greatly lacking, and I remember inspecting some cast-off greatcoats of the London Metropolitan Police in a second-hand clothes shop, and wondering whether it was to be that

or nothing. I recalled another of Jemmy Watson's Limericks :

> There was a young man of the Cape
> Whose trousers were fashioned with crape,
> When they said, do they tear? He replied, here and there,
> But in summer they're really first rate.

No preparations had been made for the raising of loyal troops, and the shifts of expedients of all concerned in the raising of mounted regiments at the Cape and in Natal at this time were a miracle of improvisation. It was the same with infantry. I was asked one morning to find 200 infantry to guard a certain station the same evening. There were none to send. But the staff of an excellent Volunteer regiment, the Cape Town Highlanders, took on the job. We raised the men in a few hours, clothed and armed them, and sent them off, with their belts fastened by boot laces. They did not know one end of their rifles from the other, but there it was. During the fortnight before the Army Corps began to arrive, the Free Staters could have ridden through Cape Colony from end to end and have been joined by thousands of rebels, had there been any gumption about the Boers on the Cape side at that time. They might have reached Cape Town. But fortunately they were not the formidable partisans which they became later, and the great leaders had not yet come to the front. More to their own want of appreciation of the opening left to them than to our defence was due our comparative immunity during the first fortnight of November 1899.

The idea which prevailed in the mind of Sir Redvers Buller at this time was to dig out Sir George White from Ladysmith, and then to return to the original plan of campaign which was that eventually followed

by Lord Roberts. Sir Redvers lived apart from his staff and consulted them but rarely. I seldom knew what was in his mind, and when, with Stopford and his A.D.C.'s, he left Cape Town for Natal on November 22, I did not know until he had gone, nor, I think, did many others; but we were told that he would be back in a fortnight, and he left much of his kit behind. General Sir F. Forestier Walker, who had succeeded Sir William Butler, was left in nominal command at the Cape, but Buller himself sent directions to us, and messages to his generals after he left, and Wynne wrote the orders to the generals at the Cape front. It was not a satisfactory state of things.

The remains of the Headquarters Staff did their best to help when their Chief had left. The Free Staters had crossed the border at Norval's Pont and Bethulie bridges, and it was this that had caused Buller to withdraw the little garrisons of Naauwpoort and Stormberg to De Aar and Queenstown. A 5th Division was mobilised at home on November 11, when it was found that we had been forced to send one of our divisions to Natal. We were soon forced to send more. The Somerset Light Infantry, the 13th Hussars and the Royals, the artillery of the 2nd Division, and Hart's brigade of the 2nd Division all followed. I think, whatever wisdom or the reverse there may have been in these measures, all branches of the staff showed a great faculty for adaptation to circumstances in executing them without any serious hitch.

Lord Methuen, whose cheery enthusiasm was catching, reached Orange River Station on November 12, and at once prepared for his advance on Kimberley. Further east, the Free Staters entered Aliwal in triumph on the 13th, and Colesberg on the 14th. They were

slow, and Andy Wauchope reoccupied Naauwpoort on the 19th. French joined him and took command, and then began the masterly series of operations which, for three months, covered all our railways from Cape Town to the front and drew down most of the available Free Staters to oppose him at Colesberg. Burghersdorp fell to the Boers on the 15th and Johnstown on the 18th. On the 22nd the Free Staters reached Barkly East, on the hunt for good farming ground to annex, and penetrated as far south as Steynsberg. They occupied Stormberg on November 26, and all this time practically unopposed in the north-east because we had nothing to oppose them with. Gatacre was, however, slowly collecting a small mixed force south of Stormberg at Bushman's Hoek, and was doing his best by his activity to keep up our wicket in this region. We were terribly handicapped in November by the failure of the Government to proclaim martial law. It was only on November 15 that Mr. Schreiner could be induced to make such proclamation, and then it was only partial, and many rebels had already joined the enemy.

We were now on the eve of the Black Week, and Gatacre was the first to begin the tale of our three misfortunes. Gatacre had been the greatest sufferer of all from the redistribution of troops rendered inevitable by the successful Boer initiative on all fronts. Of the fine division which he expected to command only one battalion was left with him, and early in December his total force was only two infantry battalions, 300 mounted infantry, and 1000 men of local corps, in all 3000 men with a few 7-pr. guns. On December 5 there reached him two field batteries and another battalion, while Queenstown behind had a small safety garrison. But

his right was open except in so far as the native districts covered it, and between Gatacre and French there were 120 miles of country, with only one detachment of 900 men at Cradock. Worst of all, the Boers and rebels were daily becoming more aggressive and more numerous, the whole country was seething with disloyalty, and, badly as we were off for troops, an act of vigour was decidedly necessary to re-establish our fortunes, for the pure defensive could not cover all the area which required protection.

Gatacre determined to strike at Stormberg and endeavour to reoccupy it. Buller from Natal approved and suggested a night attack, but subsequently, feeling, no doubt, that he had no right to dictate tactical procedure at such a distance, withdrew his suggestion and left Gatacre full discretion. Gatacre determined to carry his infantry and guns by train to Molteno, to make a night march thence to the hills round Stormberg where the Boers were in position, and to rush it at dawn. He had only 2600 men for this operation, and everything went wrong from first to last when the movement began on December 9. An order sent by his staff to some local troops to co-operate on his right failed to reach them, and they never turned up. Owing to bad management, the movement by rail took the whole day of the 9th from 4 A.M. to 8.30 P.M., and it was with troops already fatigued by a long day that the night march began across unknown country with guides who were not too sure of the road. The day began to dawn on the 10th, and, uncertain of the exact position, the troops, still in column of route, arrived within a few hundred yards of the sleeping Boers. The Boer sentries saw the column and opened fire, and, deploying under difficulties, the infantry endeavoured to storm the hill,

unsupported by guns, and soon came up against a wall of steep rocks which they could not climb. On the left things went better, but when Gatacre saw, to his despair, part of his infantry of the main attack streaming back across the valley, he knew that the game was up and ordered a retirement on Molteno. The losses by fire were small, but under the rocky krantz and in the rough ground zone 600 men were left behind and were forced to surrender. Gatacre and his staff officer, Ralph Allen, exposed themselves recklessly in endeavouring to avert defeat, and the guns and mounted infantry did well throughout the day, but the infantry were too harassed by fatigue to give their full fighting value, and ill-luck dogged Gatacre all through the operation. Another battery, and a battalion under Smith-Dorrien, who was a host in himself, were sent to join him at Sterkstroom upon which he fell back. The situation was very bad, but fortunately the Boers at this time were not men enough to take advantage of their success and allowed their opportunity to pass.

When Methuen had been ordered to relieve Kimberley he had about 8000 men, with others available, if necessary, on his line of communications between Orange River Station and Cape Town. He was short of mounted men, but only 4000 or 5000 Boers were known of in his front, for Cronje was still besieging Mafeking 300 miles away, and the ground between the Orange River and Kimberley was open with a railway for supply. Methuen started on November 21, beat the Boers at Belmont on the 23rd, and at Graspan on the 25th, where the Naval Brigade lost heavily. There followed the action at Modder River on November 28, where, after a long and trying fight, Methuen compelled the Boers to evacuate their position on the 29th and to

fall back upon Jacobsdal, despite the Transvaal reinforcements and de la Rey's energetic and clever tactics. But the Boers were now reinforced up to 8000 strong, owing to the transfer of Cronje's force by railway and road from Mafeking, and took position under Cronje at Magersfontein, where Methuen, having been reinforced to 13,000 men by all available troops, attacked him at dawn on December 11. The Highlanders, caught within 400 yards of the enemy in the act of deploying, were mown down, and the attack failed, with nearly 1000 casualties. Andy Wauchope, the chivalrous leader of the Highland Brigade, and many more good men, were killed. The relief of Kimberley, for the moment, was stopped, and affairs at this point settled down for long to a condition of passivity.

These two blows were bad enough, but worse was to follow. On December 15, having collected all the available troops in Natal south of the Tugela, Sir Redvers Buller, with the object of relieving Ladysmith, made an unsuccessful attempt to attack the Colenso position frontally, and broke off the engagement with a loss of a little over 1100 casualties. There had been no real attack, but on the 16th Buller cabled to Lord Lansdowne, the Secretary for War, that the relief of Ladysmith was impossible, that Sir George White would be compelled to lay down his arms, and that he, Sir Redvers, proposed to entrench himself at Chieveley. Buller was told to persevere or come home, and it was immediately decided by Lord Salisbury, Lord Lansdowne, and Mr. Balfour, with such Ministers as were in town, to offer the supreme command to Lord Roberts, and the post of Chief of Staff to Lord Kitchener. On Sunday night, December 17, these appointments were announced, with the statement that the situation in

Natal called for Sir Redvers Buller's undivided attention.

The seven weeks which we had spent at Cape Town had been a nightmare. We had to watch, with what calmness we could command, the plan crumbling away to dust, a field army in Natal accepting the position of a passive garrison, the Army Corps broken up, Natal and Cape Colony invaded, rebellion rampant, and we forced to take our orders from the Boer initiative, and not from our own, while our friends were falling on every side, victims of a policy neither married to strategy nor co-related with the real situation in South Africa.

Sir Redvers Buller was not in any way responsible for the abominable situation which faced him when he landed on October 31 at Cape Town. Nor do I think that the wisdom of his decision to postpone the advance from Cape Colony upon Bloemfontein until he had cleared Natal and released White's 13,000 men at Ladysmith can be seriously impugned. It was in Natal that the Boers were making their chief effort, and all the best of the Transvaal Boers were there. It was nothing to do with Buller that the Boers had the initiative. It was the inevitable result of policy, time, and distance. Sir Alfred Milner had declared that the loyal colony Natal would be defended by the whole strength of the Empire, and had Buller not made his chief effort in Natal, Ladysmith would have fallen and Natal had been overrun before any such advance on Bloemfontein as was practicable to us at that time, with such troops as we had, would necessarily or even probably have diverted the Transvaalers from their prey. It is not reasonable to suppose that the Army Corps could have effected in a few weeks a work that took 300,000 British troops nearly three years to carry out.

Judging after the event, with all the facts, figures, and maps at our disposal, we see clearly enough that our home authorities had hopelessly miscalculated the strength and the nature of force to be employed, and had not the vaguest conception of the problem before us, whether with regard to our rebels, or the Boers, or geography. I need only recall, as a small example, the railway staff which we took with us on the *Dunnottar Castle* to organise railways in a region as large as Central Europe. This staff consisted of Girouard, one batman, one horse, and one groom. Girouard said on landing that he would spare the Government the expense of the horse and the groom, but would require a little other help. In a few months his staff had grown to several hundred officers and 5000 men. It was typical of the whole miscalculation, and such miscalculation will ever recur in a State which refuses to maintain a General Staff to think out and prepare in advance campaigns involved in the policy of its government.

It certainly is true that before November 22 Buller might with advantage have informed the Government that our task had been underestimated, and that they should revise their calculations. We sent home daily by cable the most appalling lists of our needs which might indeed have given the War Office an inkling of what was coming, but I do not know that Buller ever clearly stated that we were in no position to carry out all that we were expected to do. Probably he did not grasp the fact himself. He had told me on the way out to the Cape, when I asked him how he proposed to meet the Boer tactics, that he intended to knock them off the kopjes with his guns; but he also told me, after a week at Cape Town, that he 'felt like a man who had got up late in the morning and was going to be late for everything all day.'

That was, in fact, his exact position, and if he did not advise the Government conformably, it was perhaps due to his belief in himself and his troops, and to the natural distaste of a commander, before he had put fortune to the touch by giving battle, to make complaints of his insufficiency of force. Buller was a *grand seigneur*, ever beloved of his troops, and blindly trusted by all until his limitations were revealed. He had been one of the great figures of the time in the Wolseley régime, and as a younger man had done right well on many occasions. But for years he had been at the War Office out of touch with troops and the march of progress. He had lived with the great ones of the earth, but not with the working army. He had been the right hand of the old Duke for years, and had practically commanded the army. He was an impressive, dominating, and striking figure, and the curious mixture of obstinacy and vacillation which lay deep down in his nature was concealed from all but a very few by his firm, impassive, and commanding exterior.

His position of supremacy at the War Office he carried with him into the field. He did not fully understand, nor know how to use, a modern staff, nor did he understand the mechanism of staff work. He was impatient of advice and never sought it. He took care that supplies were abundant, but often, and to his cost and ours, placed supply before strategy at critical moments. Yet, through it all, he was much beloved, and by all ranks. His messages to Gatacre and Methuen after their defeats were most generous, and displayed the greatness of his nature, but his weakness came out in his hatred of losing men, due to kindness of heart, whereby more losses were caused rather than less, and it cannot be claimed for him that he was that mighty

figure which the extraordinary difficulties of our position required. I do not think it is wonderful that he was not. Only a very great man, and, I think, a very much younger man, could have extricated the army from the false position in which it was placed without some disappointments. What can be said is that Buller took some correct decisions, defended both Cape Colony and Natal with a large measure of success, and prepared the ground for Lord Roberts when the latter arrived with all the additional forces which were necessary to prosecute the original plan. Buller made a strong opening, and, if he did not do more, it was because he had palpably insufficient means, and means of the wrong sort, while the initiative had been taken out of his hands and presented to the enemy by policy and circumstances over which he had no control.

CHAPTER XIII

SPION KOP

On the way from Cape Town to Durban we put in at Port Elizabeth and East London, and were well satisfied with the arrangements which we found there. At Durban we met Captain Scott of the *Terrible* and had a good talk with him. We inspected our arrangements on the Line of Communication which was under Wolfe-Murray, and had again every reason to be satisfied. At Maritzburg we saw Hely-Hutchinson, the Governor of Natal, and I was favourably impressed by him. We thence made the best of our way to Frere, where Sir Redvers Buller and his personal staff had made their headquarters.

On the first occasion that presented itself I rode out to the advanced posts to examine the Colenso position and ascertain the causes of the set-back of December 15. I could not imagine why Sir Redvers had attacked at Colenso. The Tugela was broad and deep, and passable only by the bridge which was still intact, and at a few drifts which were held by the enemy. An uninterrupted line of trenches faced all the chief points of passage, and the kopjes beyond the river were also entrenched. Even if these were overcome, the Boers still held a vast amphitheatre of heights all round, from Hlangwane on the right bank—the capture of which was obviously the necessary prelude to the passage of the river Colenso—round by Grobelaar Hill to Red

Hill. These hills were occupied by the best of the Boer guns which held the whole of the lower ground under their menace. One or more of them had to be taken before we could get out of the hateful hole called the Colenso position. A more uninviting point of attack could not be imagined, and it fully justified the famous remark of the American Military Attaché when he first saw it, 'O hell! isn't there a way round?'

I endeavoured to ascertain the reasons for the choice of the point of attack. Some thought that Sir Redvers, because the Boers had remained hidden, and had not opened fire on the two occasions when he reconnoitred the position, had thought that it was unoccupied. Others thought that the news of Methuen's defeat had prevented the Chief from prosecuting a turning movement by the Upper Tugela, and had induced him to remain in a position where he would be less cut off from news. Neither explanation was very satisfying, so I asked my old brigadier, Lyttelton, why none of the generals had protested before the attack. Lyttelton said that the position of supremacy which Buller occupied made protests difficult, and that, in their absolute confidence in Buller, his generals, or he, Lyttelton himself, at all events, felt sure that the Chief must know something more than they did. Sir Redvers seldom spoke to us, and lived apart from his staff with Stopford, his military secretary, and the A.D.C.'s. Colenso was a sore subject with him, and after all, it was no use crying over spilt milk. It was not inviting to continue my researches any further.

I found at Frere the 4th and 5th Brigades. At Chieveley were the 2nd and 6th with the naval guns and the mounted troops. There was a body of our Colonial Scouts at Weenen protecting our right, and

the line of communications down to Pietermaritzburg was guarded by strong detachments. There were about 16,000 Boers in Natal, all told; and in front of us, since Colenso was fought, they had extended their left to Monte Cristo, and their right, in small parties, to Acton Homes. They were not so strong as we were, but their positions were formidable, and their victories had given them a confidence not to be disdained.

A few days after I reached Frere, and before dawn on January 6, I heard the sounds of the Boer attack upon Cæsar's Camp at Ladysmith, and it was evident that a heavy fight was in progress. The hours passed by, and we did nothing. All that happened on our side at Chieveley was a feeble demonstration. If any messages came from White, as I believe they did, I was not made acquainted with them. Here also I may mention that the famous exchange of cipher messages between Buller and White the day after the fight at Colenso was not known to me, either at the time or at any time while I was in South Africa. It was only after my return home that I learnt about them. The same is true of the urgent messages from Lord Roberts urging Buller to attack resolutely at the time of Vaal Krantz. So far as I know, Stopford was the only officer who knew about them. Stopford was a pattern of loyalty to his chief, but in failing to prevent Buller in the first case from sending injudicious messages to White, and in the second case in concealing from the Staff the instructions of Lord Roberts, he did a terrible disservice to his chief and to all of us. I do not consider it true loyalty to allow a chief to do foolish things when a word in season may prevent it. Captain Cayzer, who sent the messages, necessarily knew about them if he knew the cipher, but in any case he was merely an agent for transmission

and not responsible in any way. It is impossible for a Staff to fulfil its mission in war unless it is entirely trusted by its commander and kept informed of all essential facts.

By this time, thanks to the arrival of the 5th Division under Sir Charles Warren at Estcourt, we had in Natal south of the Tugela some 30,000 men, forces adequate for the relief of Ladysmith. As Colenso was most uninviting, we had the alternatives of turning movements either up the river or down stream. The first threatened the line of retreat of the Free Staters across the Drakensberg, and the second that of the Transvaal Boers. I was in favour of an advance by Weenen and our right, as the Transvaal men were the main strength of the enemy, and it was probable that they would abandon the siege of Ladysmith and release White as soon as they felt our pressure. But it did not much matter by which flank we acted so long as we marched rapidly, at first by night, and made full use of our mounted troops. Any delay or slow movement was likely to be dangerous, as the Boers, when warned, would move quickly to meet us, and would confront us with the need of another frontal attack. Speed was of the essence of our problem at this time.

It must be remembered, in all that follows, that our armies in those days had no General Staff, and no Operations Branch. I soon learnt from Colonel Wynne, Buller's Chief of Staff, that Buller had decided upon an operation on the Upper Tugela. We were to march to Springfield, sixteen miles away, in four days, to cover the assembly there of convoys with seventeen days' supplies, and then to arrive before Potgieters' Drift on the fifth day. I disapproved strongly of this plan, told Wynne that I did, and gave my reasons. The slow

processional movement across the Boer front in full view of the enemy was sure to be noticed at once, and long before we could cross the river the heights to the north of it were sure to be occupied and entrenched. The best chance, I thought, lay in rapidity of movement, and the carrying through of the turning movement as a surprise. Wynne did not like the plan either, but he said that Buller had made up his mind and that it was useless to discuss the matter. I therefore went off to Lyttelton and told him what was in the wind and what I thought of it. He was a man whom Buller trusted, and I asked him to try and alter the plan. He listened to what I had to say but was unwilling to approach Buller. However, he promised to go down to Estcourt at once and to lay the case before Warren. He did so, and on his return told me that Warren said he knew so little about the situation that he was not in a position to express any opinion about it. There was nothing to be done, and I watched during the ensuing operations the fulfilment of my worst anticipations.

Barton's 6th Brigade and part of the mounted troops were left at Chieveley as a containing force, a rôle which they performed exceedingly well, and the remainder, numbering five infantry brigades, seven field and one howitzer battery, with 2000 mounted troops, in all about 23,000 men, started off early on January 10, and on the 12th Buller's Headquarters were at Spearman's Hill. He then decided to use part of his force under Lyttelton to cross at Potgieters' Drift on the 16th and contain the enemy, while the rest went on to Trichardt's Drift under Warren. This latter force Buller told me to hit off at night on the march and to return and report to him if it secured Trichardt's Drift. I rode off on a very dark night in the rain, and after a toss or two in wire

and dongas I hit off the head of the column by a stroke of luck and went with it to the hills above Trichardt's Drift, where we arrived soon after midnight and lay down for a few hours to rest the men. In the morning Warren began to cross, and so soon as I saw that he was fairly started off, and that the crossing was not seriously opposed in the low ground, I rode back to Buller to report progress which, up to the time I had left, was fairly good. Soon afterwards Buller himself rode out to Trichardt's, but I remained at the headquarters at Spearman's engaged upon other work.

Lord Roberts, I afterwards learnt, had telegraphed to Buller urging the importance of avoiding all delay, and saying that rapidity of movement was everything. So it was. But while Warren might have seized the heights on the 16th he made no attempt to do so on the 16th, 17th, or 18th, and meanwhile the Boers naturally swarmed in our direction and began entrenching furiously, not only on the Brakfontein position facing Lyttelton, but on Spion Kop and all the Tabanyama ridge facing Warren. The whole point of the operation was lost, and when I rode out and saw rows and rows of ox-waggons crossing Warren's bridges and still no effort made to seize the heights, I regarded the operation as already more than three parts spoiled. We of the Headquarters Staff had nothing to do. Warren commanded at one place, Lyttelton at another, and Barton at a third. Sir Redvers rather commented than commanded, and the force was already much broken up.

The best thing done on our left was Dundonald's movement on Acton Homes. This success might have been followed up, but Warren decided on a frontal attack and began it on the 20th. This attack worked its way up the spurs and ravines of Tabanyama, but the

resolution to attack the Boers, whose trenches were withdrawn from the crest, was not arrived at, and the fight became more or less stationary during the days of the 21st and 22nd. On this latter date Buller rode out to Warren and plainly intimated his discontent. He told Warren that he must do something or his force would be withdrawn. Clery was against the turning of the Boer right, and ultimately it was decided, *faute de mieux*, to attack Spion Kop. But even this was again postponed, and when I rode out with Buller to Warren's camp at Three Tree Hill on January 23, Buller plainly told Warren that the attack must be made that night, and he suggested General Woodgate to lead it.

Buller then called me up and the others fell back. He told me that he intended to take Spion Kop and wished me to accompany General Woodgate. I asked him what he wished the column to do when it had taken the hill. He thought for a moment and said, 'It has got to stay there.' I then said that we should want guns, and suggested the mountain battery which was doing nothing at Frere. Buller turned to one of his staff and told him to order the battery up. Owing to a misunderstanding it never arrived in time and was not present at the rendezvous in the evening. The only other request that I made to Sir Redvers was to point out to me on the ground the exact point which he wished us to take, as the maps were so bad that we scarcely ever referred to them. He did so. I found that the column was to consist of 1700 men of Woodgate's brigade, namely, the Lancashire Fusiliers, six companies of the Lancasters, and two of the South Lancashires, with about 200 of Thorneycroft's mounted infantry and half the 17th Company R.E.

There was no plan except that we were to take the

hill and stay there. Some 1700 men were to assault a hill 1740 feet high in the centre of the Boer position, and the rest of Buller's 20,000 men were to look on and do nothing. Spion Kop was a perfectly open dominating height exposed to fire from every Boer gun in the field, and though its attempted capture as part of a general plan of attack was legitimate and perhaps necessary, this was not true of it as an isolated act. Unable or unwilling to launch their troops in a general attack at dawn, which would in my opinion have succeeded, our Generals decided upon Spion Kop as a make-believe of energy and decision. It was the old, the fatal, story of 'If we fail we can't lose many men.'

As I had been chosen to accompany this attack it was not my business to question it but only to obey orders. The only man I mentioned the project to was Sandbach, the head of our Intelligence, who had come up and asked me about it. I said that we were going to attack Spion Kop; that it was another Majuba; and that all I could do was to see that the mistakes made at Majuba were not repeated. I assumed that Buller would take proper steps to inform the rest of the army what was up that night; but Lyttelton, who commanded the force which had crossed at Potgieters' Drift and would be on our immediate right if we succeeded, afterwards told me that he knew nothing of the plan at all until we had taken the hill.

However, our job was to take Spion Kop, and I went off at once to reconnoitre it from the ridge east of Three Tree Hill. There was a long and strongly-marked spur running from the top of Spion Kop to the south and south-west, and I saw that if we reached that spur at night we could not miss the way up. I saw Thorneycroft, who shared my opinion, and as Woodgate ap-

proved, the rendezvous was fixed for 8.30 P.M. in the gully south of Three Tree Hill. The detailed arrangements for the operation were made by Woodgate's Brigade-Major, Captain Vertue, with whom I had some talk about preparations, and I then went off to collect Colonel Parsons and his battery commanders, and to concert measures with them. I showed them our objective, and suggested that they should lay their guns by day, and not open fire until they learnt from our cheering that we were on the top. I asked them then to keep a steady fire on the northern slopes of Spion Kop in order to give us time to entrench, and to fend off any Boer counter-attack. It was, in fact, the barrage as practised fourteen years later, and I asked that a gunner officer with signallers should come up with us from the batteries so that he might direct the fire. He would be what we should call now the 'forward observing officer.' There is not much new under the sun.

Tom Capper, who was Warren's Staff Officer, and one of the best of soldiers, wrote our orders for the attack, but we did not need orders as the duty in front of us was clear. It was pitch dark when the troops reached their rendezvous. Thorneycroft's men were in front and then the Lancashire Fusiliers next. The mountain battery we had heard nothing of, but we could not wait for it. At the head of the column I found Thorneycroft, who asked me who was going to lead the show. Woodgate and Vertue came up, and it was agreed that Thorneycroft should lead as he knew the ground best and had 200 of his men under him. We set off when the column was completed, marching first in fours and then in file. It was so black that I could not see my hand before my face. I have ever been grateful to Lord Tullibardine, who was in charge of a picket of the

Royals, for not firing into us that night. We passed across his front, and I believe he had not been warned of our enterprise. We groped our way along and I remained with Thorneycroft most of the time. It was very slow work crossing the valley by a mere track where we had to march in single file, and during the constant checks on the march the men, who were tired after being a week under arms and fighting without regular rest, lay down and fell asleep. At one moment we lost touch. I had to go back to look for the lost sheep, and found that the centre had fallen asleep while the van was slowly moving forward. At last we found ourselves on the slopes of the hill, and ascended cautiously, keeping below the crest to the left of the ridge as we ascended.

There are few excitements like a night attack. I remember well Thorneycroft suddenly dropping to the ground, and showing me what he thought was a Boer picket a few yards distant. It was now getting a little lighter, and we could distinguish objects a few yards off. We had a whispered conversation and then went up to the supposed picket and found only rocks. We continued to climb slowly up, and at the steepest part it was very rocky, and I had to help Woodgate up as he was rather lame. Just before we began the ascent a large white dog, the pet of some regiment, appeared at the head of the column. His colour was fatal, and one yelp would have given us all away. We thought of strangling him, but finally we made a pull-through into a lead, carefully avoiding a slip knot, and sent him back in charge of a bugler. After the rocks we came upon a broader part of the ridge, and had to decide if we should still keep under the crest or deploy across the ridge. I was for the deployment, and Thorneycroft's men formed line noiselessly across the ridge and lay

down. We had to wait what appeared to be an age until the rest of the infantry came up and formed lines behind us, and I dropped a company of the Fusiliers at a strong sunga to hold on in case we got into a mess.

Then we went on. It was now threatening to become light too soon, when we observed that we had entered a thick white mist, and could not see a dozen yards. On we went until we realised from the lie of the ground that we must be close to the summit. The men were as quiet as mice as the line moved silently forward, when all of a sudden there rang out a Boer challenge which was followed by a few words of some one trying to answer the enemy back in his own language. It would not do, and then came the first shot fired into us at thirty yards range, followed by a regular fusillade. Unknown to me, the order had been given to the men to throw themselves down, and they all did so as one man. The order might have been fatal, and I hope it may never be repeated, for it might have given time to the enemy to line his trenches and recover from his surprise. We all saw the error at the same moment and called for a charge. A hoarse, fierce shout went up, and the men swept forward driving the Boer commando off the hill in front of us and right away. They would not wait for us, and in the thick mist we could not see where they had gone. Parties were now sent forward to reconnoitre, and Major Massey, R.E., was ordered to tape out the best position for the trenches. He was an excellent officer, and though the position of this main trench-line has been questioned, I believe that it was as good a line as could have been found, considering that the mist was so thick and that we could not now see more than thirty yards in front of us.

We disposed all our troops along the tapes and in

reserve, and the men set to work with a will to make the trenches. This proved extraordinarily difficult, for the grassy slope was deceptive, and below a few inches of soil we came upon solid rock, and the light entrenching tools of the infantry proved almost useless to make an impression on it. The engineers helped with their stronger tools, and gradually we made defences of a kind and most of the men made loopholes, but Woodgate's brigade had not drawn the sandbags which were ready for them at the rendezvous, and this neglect proved most unfortunate. We made a trench 200 yards in length along the forward crest of the central plateau facing north, with another 100 yards long on the left facing north-west. I went to fetch the ammunition, and, taking the boxes off the mules, distributed them along the trenches so that we might not run short of bullets, and we discovered a small spring in a hollow close at hand. Our right was thrown back a little with curved sangars to prevent enfilading from the north, and their right rested upon some rocks covering a little hollow which we destined for a dressing-station. We had begun to make trenches for supports, and Parsons' guns below were busy shelling the northern slopes of the hills and keeping off a counter-attack until we were ready. Given the long climb, the seven days of previous fighting which the men had gone through, the impenetrable mist, the rocky ground, and the weak tools, I do not think that much more could have been done in the time that was allowed us to entrench the position.

Woodgate had taken up his position at the highest point of the hill by an outcrop of large rocks just in rear of the main trench, and here I joined him when the defences were as complete as they could be made. We

had a dish of tea, and Woodgate was satisfied that he had carried out his mission. But the Boers were already beginning to send their bullets among us, and owing to the mist we could not communicate with either Warren, or Lyttelton, or the guns. Woodgate therefore wrote a short report on his position for Warren and asked me to take it to him, and then go on to Buller and inform him of the situation. I left the engineers preparing a road up the hill for the guns which we hoped were following, and by my advice Woodgate asked for some 12-pr. naval guns, and for support on his right from Lyttelton. I took the message and returned by the way we had come at about 7.45 A.M. At the bottom of the hill I met a man of the Royals, and, borrowing his horse, rode as hard as I could to Warren and presented my report at about 9 A.M. My groom, who was one of the Greys, had been badly wounded by a shell in my absence, but at last I found my horse and, having told Warren all that there was to tell about Lyttelton, the guns, water, and sandbags, was just about to mount when Warren called me back.

He had received the first message from the hill, and it could not have been much worse. It purported to be from Colonel Crofton commanding the Lancaster companies, and the words were 'Reinforce at once or all lost. General dead.' Actually, I believe that the message was incorrectly given by a signaller who only had verbal instructions to say that Woodgate was dead, and that reinforcements were needed, but Warren could only read what was in the message, and asked me what I thought of it. I did not know Crofton, and supposed that he had lost his head, so I advised Warren to send him a stiff message, and this he did.

I made the best of my way to Buller who was back

at Spearman's, eight miles from Three Tree Hill by road, and reached him at about 11.20. I made a report upon the situation and asked for some 12-pr. guns, which Buller ordered to join Warren after consulting the latter, and I then occupied myself in directing the fire of the guns so that they might cross their fire as much as possible with those of Parsons across the north front of the position on the hill. This fire was frequently checked by Warren's complaints that we were firing on our own men, but I did not think we were. Buller had asked me about the senior officers on the summit, and I had praised Thorneycroft warmly, so Buller suggested to Warren that Thorneycroft should be given command on the hill, and this was done.

Meantime Lyttelton, who had made a demonstration towards Brakfontein early, had at last become aware of what was happening at Spion Kop, and had received messages from Warren and from the hill requesting his co-operation. The Scottish Rifles were sent up Spion Kop where they were welcome, and the 60th under Buchanan-Riddell advanced straight upon the Twin Peaks. This latter extremely bold movement succeeded, in spite of losses, and by 5 P.M. the 60th were on the crest where, had they been reinforced or even left where they stood, there was still time to have won the whole position. But they were recalled. Lyttelton had become anxious about the movement, and Buller had been very angry about it. Repeated orders had been sent to recall the 60th from 3 P.M. onward, but it was not till 8 P.M. that Bewicke-Copley, who assumed command after Riddell's death, reluctantly withdrew after the receipt of a direct order which could not be disobeyed.

The details of the subsequent fight on the hill itself have often been described, and have given rise to many

controversies. I do not propose to add anything to them except by saying that if our preliminary success had been followed up, and if the army had attacked, instead of only our detachment, the battle would have been a victory. Our night surprise had carried confusion into the Boer ranks. The burghers had hated the hammering of our guns and many thought only of flight. All the Boer laagers on the plain behind Spion Kop and Tabanyama packed up and trekked hastily away towards Ladysmith and the Drakensberg to get out of range of the shelling from Spion Kop which they expected. Serious pressure along the whole of our front would have provoked a panic, but when the hours passed and found us still immobile, the best of the enemy, well led by Botha and Schalk Burger, began to collect to try and recover the hill, and the guns were all moved to assist them. What actually happened on our side was that reinforcements were crammed into the confined space on the hill where they were the mark for every Boer gun on the ground, and that our guns, unable from the lie of the ground to see or locate the Boer guns, could not knock the latter out. We might have utilised the four hours of morning mist on Spion Kop and Tabanyama for a general advance, or we might have been ready to advance if Spion Kop were taken. We might again have profited by the bold initiative of the 60th in the afternoon. We did none of these things, but the cardinal error lay in the original plan, which deserved to fail and failed.

Warren withdrew across the river on the 26th after these futile operations with some 1800 casualties. We were all in a very bad temper, but ready to begin again.

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CHAPTER XIV

VAAL KRANTZ

THE situation at Ladysmith did not permit of much delay in the prosecution of our enterprise for its relief, nor could Buller afford to leave the Boers free either to attack White again or to slip away to oppose Lord Roberts, whose advance upon Kimberley was on the point of beginning.

Wynne succeeded the gallant Woodgate in the command of his brigade, and Miles became Chief of Staff. Wynne's brigade replaced Lyttelton's on the kopjes north of Potgieters' Drift, and the rest of the force prepared to carry out Buller's new plan for the capture of Vaal Krantz, which was the easterly extension of the Brakfontein position. Opposite Vaal Krantz, and on the south bank, Swaartz Kop offered a dominating position for our guns, and though Doorn Kop, still more dominating, threatened danger east of Vaal Krantz on the north bank, it was not occupied except by pickets, and there was a fair chance, if we took Vaal Krantz, and the Green Hill immediately to the east of it, that we might press through to the Ladysmith plain. Time was once more vital, for if we loitered and hung about we were sure to find the Boers on Doorn Kop in strength.

The sailors and the Scots Fusiliers dragged some fourteen guns up Swaartz Kop. Two 5-inch guns under Callwell had reached us, besides a horse battery and

two squadrons of the 14th Hussars. We threw a pontoon over the river north of Swaartz Kop, and prepared to throw another to the east of it. The scheme was somewhat complicated. We were to begin by a demonstration against Brakfontein, which was to be carried out by Wynne's brigade and seven batteries. Clery's 2nd Division, with the 4th Brigade, were to be placed as though they meant to cross at No. 2 Pontoon from east to west, and when all this demonstration and bombardment had caused the enemy to enter his trenches, the plan was to pass the batteries with Wynne in succession from west to east over No. 2 Pontoon, to throw No. 3 Pontoon, to turn all the guns upon Vaal Krantz, and then for the 4th Brigade to cross and storm the hill supported by the 2nd Division. Dundonald was to watch our right and rear, and the 10th Brigade was left to hold our camp at Spearman's Hill. Dundonald's own orders suggested to him the Doorn Kop crests as an objective, but as he was told not to become seriously engaged he was not encouraged to persevere.

On the morning of February 5 I rode down with Miles at dawn to the northern slopes of Swaartz Kop, and told him what an extraordinary thing it seemed to me that he, who had never seen a shot fired in his life, should fight his first battle as Chief of Staff to an army of 25,000 men. Miles had not had the luck to see real soldiering before, but he was a man of great intelligence, admirable in an office, with a very pretty wit which became caustic when things went wrong, and, on the whole, perhaps as good a man for the difficult task of serving Buller as could well have been found. It was not till 6 A.M. that Wynne moved, and we watched with interest the working out of the demonstration in which

the naval and other guns left at Mount Alice joined. Wynne moved slowly in very open order, and his infantry and guns went on so far that I began to think that he was going too far. At about 11.30 the Boer guns and a pom-pom on the Twin Peaks opened in enfilade on Wynne's guns at 5000 yards range and gave them a rare dusting, nor could we silence the Boer guns, which were admirably placed. The retirement of our guns began as ordered, and it was a very pretty sight to see their discipline under fire and their exact performance of their mission. Wynne's infantry continued their advance up to within 2000 yards of the Brakfontein trenches which were ominously silent. At 1 P.M. the infantry turned to retire, whereupon the Brakfontein trenches gave out a furious fire which ran all down the line, and to the full orchestra of the enemy the demonstration closed and the serious business of the day began.

The day was already dragging vexatiously as though time were nothing. Irvine had completed No. 3 Pontoon soon after 11 A.M., but it was not till 2 P.M. that Buller permitted Lyttelton with the 4th Brigade to cross. We were now hammering Vaal Krantz with all our guns and making the dust and splinters fly in every direction, but the Boers were already insinuating themselves into the low ground between No. 3 Pontoon and Doorn Kop, and Irvine's men had suffered from their fire while making the bridge. The infantry rushed across and turned to their left under the high bank to make their way towards Vaal Krantz. The Durhams and the Rifle Brigade were leading. They left the cover and deployed for the attack under a heavy fire from all sides. We could see hundreds of bullets flicking up the dust round the men. The Durhams attacked the

southern and the Rifle Brigade the south-eastern slope of Vaal Krantz after assaulting Munger's Farm, and by 4.30 P.M., after suffering considerable loss, swept up the hill and captured it. It was a gallant attack, well executed and well led.

Meantime a serious thing had happened. Buller had stopped Lyttelton's other two battalions from crossing the bridge, and the unfortunate Brigadier, looking back for his supports, saw them not. At Lyttelton's earnest request they were now sent on, but Hildyard's brigade, which had the mission of taking Green Hill, was definitely stopped, and this disastrous decision snatched victory from our grasp as no enemy could have snatched it. Only the Devons had crossed of Hildyard's brigade, and they were drawn by Lyttelton to the captured hill. Thus, as at Spion Kop, a detachment had been unleashed, but the rest of the army had become spectators.

Soon after five Buller ordered me to join Lyttelton on Vaal Krantz and to return and report upon the situation. I crossed the bridge under the fire of the Boer snipers and reached the hill, the southern slope of which was raked by pom-pom shells as I ascended it. At the top I had a good look round and then joined Lyttelton, who was at the western foot of the steepest slope. We were entirely in agreement. The failure to assault the Green Hill had been disastrous, and it was indispensable to pursue the original plan in order that the attack might gain elbow-room. The Boers were closing in upon our pontoon, and it was necessary to lay another close under Vaal Krantz to insure the safety of Lyttelton's brigade, whether it was to be reinforced or withdrawn. The hill was already under fire from three sides, and if the Brakfontein Boers closed up towards the western face, as they had already begun to do, we

might be shot off the hill. Guns were necessary to protect Lyttelton on this flank.

I returned and reported accordingly, but although Buller accepted the suggestions about the new bridge and the guns, to my deep vexation he would not harden his heart to attack the Green Hill, whether at dawn on February 6, as I had advised, or at any other time. Consequently, that which was bound to happen, happened. The Boers swarmed over from Tabanyama, Spion Kop, Brakfontein, and even Ladysmith, men and guns, and before the day of the 6th was far advanced, they had guns in a semi-circle all round the west, north, and east of the hill, including a Long Tom on Doorn Kop, and numerous pom-poms. They even tried to assault Vaal Krantz from the north, and had some success, but a counter-stroke by the 60th, admirably conducted and with great dash, drove them off again. The gallantry of the Green Jackets in the relief and defence of Ladysmith I can never forget.

The manner in which Ben Viljoen had got away a pom-pom from Vaal Krantz the day before was an exciting moment. At the height of our attack we saw a team dash out with the gun, making towards Doorn Kloof, the drivers riding for their lives. Many of our guns turned on it, but they were not quite quick enough, and though the shells burst all round the galloping team, Viljoen got through. It was a fine thing to have done, and I was secretly glad that such a sporting gallop had not come to an untimely end.

All that happened on the 6th was that Buller relieved Lyttelton by Hildyard across the new bridge, and that by nightfall the 4th Brigade was back and resting. Our guns, on the whole, were better placed to control the Boer guns than at Spion Kop, and consequently our

men on Vaal Krantz suffered less. A lucky shot at 11,000 yards blew up the Long Tom's ammunition waggon and silenced the monster for quite a considerable time. Of the most important incident of this day I knew nothing. This was Buller's telegram to Lord Roberts saying that the prosecution of the attack would cost him from 2000 to 3000 men, and that he was not confident that he could do it. He added that it was the only possible way to relieve White, and asked the Field-Marshal whether he thought the chance of the relief of Ladysmith worth the risk. To this Lord Roberts at once replied that Ladysmith must be relieved even at the cost which Buller anticipated, and that the latter should inform his troops that the honour of the Empire was in their hands. Of this I knew nothing, and I believe that our generals knew as little.

We continued to do nothing on February 7, and at 4 P.M. that day a Council of War was called at Clery's camp, Warren, Lyttelton, Hart, Wynne, Clery, and, I think, Miles, being present. We younger staff officers, not being invited to attend, had an informal Council of our own, at which we unanimously determined that the attack ought to be continued, and only differed, and not materially, about details. But the Council of the generals decided otherwise. It confirmed the truth of the venerable maxim that a Council of War never fights, and to our intense astonishment, not to use a harder word, we learnt that we were ordered to retreat. We staff officers just looked at each other in blank amazement. Only Hart had voted for continuing the attack. There was nothing more to be said.

We got away all right—the Boers always let us do that—and, camping on the Little Tugela at Springfield, we had a swim in the delicious stream which was worth

anything in the world. The best comment on the whole affair was given by Miles. When Buller saw his last man and waggon over the river, he turned to Miles and said, 'I think we did that uncommonly well.' 'Yessir,' snapped Miles in his best staccato voice, 'Yessir, we 've practised it twice!'

CHAPTER XV

MONTE CRISTO AND PIETER'S HILL

It was Buller's intention, when we returned to Chieveley, to attack the Boers on the right bank of the Tugela from Monte Cristo to Hlangwane inclusive, and this was a perfectly reasonable thing to do so long as the Chief was determined not to act more to the right.

But the Boers were now more strongly entrenched on this line than before. Hlangwane was still held, and the front now continued eastward along the Gomba Spruit through another 'Green' Hill to the southern end of Monte Cristo, and the trenches dug by the Kaffirs were narrow, deep, and well protected in front by mealie bags filled with earth. It was therefore another frontal attack to which we were committed, but one in which the whole force could be utilised, and all our arms be brought into play.

Buller left Burn-Murdoch with the Regular Cavalry Brigade, two battalions, and some guns at Springfield Bridge to watch the Upper Tugela, and on February 11 went out with a mixed force under Dundonald to Hussar Hill to reconnoitre the enemy's position. We then wasted two days, during which Ladysmith reported that the Boers were moving east to oppose us, but on the 14th we moved out, Lyttelton now in command of the 2nd Division in place of Clery, who had been invalided. We occupied this day the hills from Moordkraal to Hussar Hill. We lost the day of the 15th,

and on the day of the 16th did some purposeless shooting, as Lyttelton thought, and rightly, that Cingolo Hill, south-east of Monte Cristo, should be cleared of Boers before he took on Monte Cristo. The day of the 17th was occupied in effecting this purpose. Dundonald's men, boldly handled, surprised the Boers by a turning movement, and drove them off the hills assisted by the Queen's, while the rest of Hildyard's brigade cleared Cingolo Nek, and the way was open for the attack on Monte Cristo.

But it was now getting late, past 5 P.M., and the troops required rearrangement for the more serious test before them. I did not want to see our forces dribble into action in the dusk, as we should lose the support of our superior artillery, and I gave this opinion to Miles, who communicated it to Buller, who approved, and I carried the resulting orders down the line. On the morning of the 18th things went well. I had piloted some guns to the right at Lyttelton's request, and Hildyard had prepared long-range rifle-fire from Cingolo upon Monte Cristo. There was a warm fight for the hill, but the 2nd Brigade were not to be denied, and, well aided by Dundonald on their right, and by the guns, swept the whole hill through the rocks and bushes and reached the rocky precipice at the northern end.

Meantime Norcott, who had succeeded Lyttelton in command of the 4th Brigade, was preparing to assault the ridge between Monte Cristo and the Green Hill, while Barton's 6th Brigade on his left was preparing to assail Green Hill. When Monte Cristo was crowned, Lyttelton gave the word, and the two brigades swept over their objectives, much aided by the 2nd Brigade on Monte Cristo, which had opened fire from the top

upon the Boer laagers below them. The Boers abandoned their trenches and fled.

Only a few miles now separated us from the Boer bridge above the Colenso Falls, which was the only line for the enemy's retreat, and it was manifestly our game to pursue with vigour and to harvest the fruits of success. I gave my views on this subject for what they were worth, but found no support except from Barton. Lyttelton thought that his men were too tired, while Buller desired that Lyttelton should even assume the defensive, in the belief that the enemy was being heavily reinforced from Ladysmith. I could see all the Boer laagers spread out before us, and the fugitives swarming down to their one line of retreat. It was a great chance. But we did nothing, while all was confusion in the Boer ranks. The defenders of Hlangwane bolted in the evening, and miles of Boer waggons were seen trekking hard to the north past Pieter's Station. It was enough to make one weep.

On February 18 our guns opened, and we cautiously advanced on that day and the 19th to the line—N. point of Monte Cristo—Bloy's Farm—Hlangwane, and occupied Colenso. The Boer rearguard at the Colenso Falls Bridge, which had shown spirit, crossed over, their bridge was partially destroyed, and the ferry punt burnt. We then, on the 20th, advanced the remaining two miles to the river, while Thorneycroft and his men crossed the river at Colenso and occupied the famous kopjes of the Colenso battle. We were now masters on the right bank, and the question was what to do next.

I was for a decisive move through Cingolo Nek to the junction of the Klip and Tugela Rivers, and thence up the valley of the Klip to the rear of Bulwana. I was never able to ride over this country after the relief,

so I cannot affirm that the advance was practicable, but I thought that the move would have led to the retreat of the Boers, and I have been given no reasons to make me believe that there were any serious difficulties in our way. Buller said that I wanted him to go down one precipice and up another, but this opinion was due to a scouting ride over Monte Cristo, where we saw the deep drop of the precipice to the river and the steep ascent up Aasvogel Kop on the other side. This was not the direction which I thought of. Whatever remote chance there was of my line being chosen was lost when Buller sent a young engineer officer to reconnoitre, and he returned, after much too short an absence to have reconnoitred my suggested line, or any other, with the opinion that an advance was not possible.

The alternative seemed to be to mass our superior artillery on the right bank in the dominating positions below the falls, to clear the enemy from the river line, to throw pontoons, and to cross in strength. But a different decision was taken, namely, to throw a pontoon west of Hlangwane, and to cross into the Colenso hole and thence march along the road to Ladysmith. This decision was only justified if the Boers had fled, for the low ground into which Buller proposed to march was encircled by high hills, from all of which the enemy could bring a converging fire on our men. I could scarcely credit my senses when I heard the decision. Pollen of the Intelligence asked me what was up, and I said, 'three days more bloody fighting in a hole,' while I told Winston Churchill, who also came up and asked questions, that 'we were going to march into the arena of the Coliseum and to be shot at from all the benches.'

This is what happened between the 22nd and 24th. Barton, who had reached the heights above the falls

and was repairing the Boer bridge, covered the right of our crossing. Hart, crossing at Colenso, occupied the Colenso kopjes to protect the left. Thorneycroft had reported numerous Boers in the Onderbroek Spruit. Coke, with the leading brigade of Warren's division, was therefore ordered to extend after crossing by the new pontoon under Hlangwane, and the Somersets, after extending, became hotly engaged at once and had a very hard day. Other troops followed them, and by dawn on the 22nd there were 15 battalions, 40 guns, and a mass of transport crammed in the low ground. Whatever views the Boers might have entertained of flight vanished when they saw the predicament in which we had placed ourselves. Buller had ordered me to bring on his own Headquarters camp across the river, and I had asked him to repeat the order, which he did. So I had to bring it along, and when we began to descend to the river the Boer guns opened on my caravan and there was a nice mess. Buller was furious with me, but Miles had heard the order, so there was nothing more to be said.

Wynne was now ordered to occupy the hills afterwards known by his name at the bend of the Tugela between the Onderbroek and Langerwacht Spruits. These hills were completely commanded by high ground in Boer holding. Wynne's brigade gallantly seized the edges of the hills, but could not get on. Wynne was here wounded, and succeeded by Crofton, who passed a bad night, and though three more battalions joined him the situation was most dangerous. In the evening I brought my caravan across, and we bedded down close to the river. I remember that night noticing the fish rising freely and promising myself a day's fishing some time or other, but suddenly I discovered that the fish

were bullets, and we had some men and horses wounded by them during the night.

The orders for the 23rd were to continue the advance. Walter Kitchener now succeeded Wynne in command of the 11th Brigade, and in a nice position he found it. Hart was now ordered to capture the next hill to Wynne's, since known as Inniskilling or Hart's Hill, and the Durhams and Rifle Brigade eventually reinforced him for this purpose. Hart went along the river bank, but had to cross Langerwacht Spruit by the railway bridge, and upon this the Boers directed a heavy pom-pom and rifle fire. The men rushed across and many fell. Hart now formed for attack in what became known as Hart's Hollow, and sent the Inniskillings and Connaughts in advance. These battalions made a most valiant attempt to take the hill, as we saw from Buller's post in the falling light, but the fire was too hot, and the Imperial Light Infantry, which fought so well at Spion Kop, and now found itself in another warm corner, could not push the attack home. The assailants fell back to the railway and hung on as best they could, having suffered heavily, and at a late hour the two 4th Brigade battalions reinforced Hart and were placed in reserve.

I had ridden out on the 23rd to see Hart's brigade across Pom-pom Bridge, and had a look at the position at Wynne Hill on my way. There was nothing good to be said for it. The men were just hanging on by their eyelids, and the Boer fire was coming in from all directions, while half of our guns were still in the low ground. At Wynne and Hart Hills we were liable to be thrown into the river by a well-pressed counter-attack. On the 24th we took no decision and the situation remained stationary, but in the afternoon

Buller sent me out to Hart to take stock again, and I found him at nightfall with his Brigade-Major M'Grigor of the 60th, in bivouac among the rocks, on which the Boer bullets were constantly flattening themselves. I told them that the further attack was to be postponed, and I then discovered that the wounded men who had fallen in the assault of the 23rd were still lying between the opposing lines and making signals for succour, but every attempt to get to them was met by a burst of fire in which no man could live, though our P.M.O. Gallwey's gallant 'body-snatchers' were the bravest of the brave.

I found that Buller had shifted camp to the right bank when I returned, and after reporting Hart's position I suggested the advisability of an armistice to save the wounded. Buller would not hear of it that night, but before dawn he had reconsidered the matter and had sent to the Boers to suggest one. Louis Botha and Lukus Meyer agreed, like the gentlemen they were, and so, on Sunday, February 25, we brought the wounded in. I remember that they included Evans of the Inniskillings, because he had as many wounds as the number of his regiment, namely, twenty-seven. Several of our officers and men chatted amicably with the Boers on this occasion. They asked Lyttelton how long the war was going to last, and he said, 'Quite a long time; I am going to bring my wife out,' a reply which caused their faces to grow longer.

On the 26th I rode out with Buller and one of his A.D.C.'s along the whole line of heights as far as Monte Cristo. Buller was showing the signs of his disappointments, and I found that I could talk to him freely. He asked my opinion, and I gave it. I said that I should not press my old scheme now because we were

committed to this line on which we were operating. I mentioned all his various detachments, and suggested that they should be brought in at once for a decisive battle. I thought that a line of guns, between the Colenso Falls and Monte Cristo, reinforced by infantry using long-range volleys, would prevent a Boer counter-attack, and suggested that he should cross all available brigades by the Boer bridge and a new pontoon, march them down the left bank under cover, and attack together on a broad front as far west as Pieter's Hill. I told him that I felt perfectly confident that our troops could beat the Boers if we attacked on a broad front, especially as we had such an admirable artillery position to cover the attack up to the very moment of the assault of the Boer trenches. I also said a few other things that were on my mind, and concealed nothing.

Very likely all this had been in Buller's mind and other people had spoken to him in the same sense. In any case, he told me to get out my note-book and write. There and then he dictated to me the orders for the next day. He had suddenly become the old War Office Buller, and dictated so rapidly that I could scarcely keep pace with him, but as he went on I saw that he had a complete grasp of the operation, and that everything that I had hoped would be done was in the orders. I rode back to find Miles and dictated to him the orders from my hieroglyphics. I expect that he improved upon the order and added details omitted. Miles generally did, and he, with Kiggell, could not be bettered for the drafting of orders.

I do not know whether many people realised the great risks of this attack. These were in the flank march of the brigades after crossing the river, all along the bank and just below the hills where the Boers were

in position. If the Boers discovered the march, and were men enough to fling themselves upon us, we should be found in column of route with our backs to an unfordable river across which there was no retreat. I did not speak of this to any one, and trusted in the guns and the long-range rifle volleys to keep the Boer heads down and the enemy in his trenches. It was an undertaking bold to the point of rashness. But it had to be done, or Ladysmith was lost.

The positions occupied by our seventy-six guns on the right bank of the Tugela to cover the projected attack were well chosen by Colonel Parsons. Most of them were on a two-mile front below the falls, but six guns were on the north-west slopes of Monte Cristo, and the whole line dominated the Boer positions and enfiladed the gullies between the various hills on the left bank. Immediately covering the guns and also on the right bank, were from left to right the composite Rifle battalion, made up of 60th and Rifle Brigade drafts for battalions at Ladysmith, and commanded by Stuart-Wortley. The Borders and Dundonald's 2nd Mounted Brigade continued the line, and there was consequently a very powerful covering fire to which the enemy could make but little reply.

Irvine began his pontoon at dawn on the 27th, and had completed it by 10 A.M. As the troops began to march down to cross it the news of Cronje's surrender at Paardeberg came in, and was quickly spread among the troops, who received it with loud cheers. Barton's brigade crossed first, and, turning to their right, moved along in single file at the foot of the hills. They were covered by the heavy fire now opened by our covering troops, and not even a sniper dared to face it. It took Barton about a couple of hours to reach Pieter's Hill

and to line up for the assault upon it. The plan was that he should attack first, that Walter Kitchener's brigade should attack Railway Hill next, and that Norcott's brigade should then assault Inniskilling Hill. It would have been better, I thought, had the attacks been simultaneous.

Barton's brigade had a hard time. There were only three battalions, and the Boers on Railway Hill joined in against him, while Barton's right was also attacked when his Scots and Irish Fusiliers rushed the plateau. The Dublins supported, while the Monte Cristo guns were of use; but for very long Barton was fighting unsupported, and had called down upon himself very considerable opposition. Kitchener attacked next the instant the order reached him. The West Yorks took Railway Hill with the assistance of part of the South Lancashires, the remainder of the latter rushing the trench between the Railway and Inniskilling Hills. The Royal Lancasters joined in, and some of them, deflected by the fire, turned upon Inniskilling Hill and effected a lodgment there, aiding Norcott's attack, which was just beginning. It was now 5 P.M., and Norcott had sent the Rifle Brigade on the left and the East Surreys on the right to the attack of Inniskilling Hill. The crest was won in fine style, and the hold was maintained, but for long into the night the Boer guns and reserves kept up a hot fire on the hill, and so prolonged was the fusillade and the artillery fire that we could not tell precisely whether the Boers had had enough or not. We owed a great debt of gratitude to the three infantry brigade commanders, who had carried out the attacks with resolution and skill.

Morning broke on the 28th, and at dawn we went off to Railway Hill, and saw, to our joy, the entire Boer

Army in full retreat. Our two cavalry brigades were rapidly passed across, and the moment had arrived for a vigorous pursuit, for which all the means were at our disposal. But a pursuit did not enter into Buller's plans. He wished to 'give them a day to get away,' and though I rode out twice to the cavalry during the day to find some pretext for pursuit, the orders were formal and there was nothing to be done. I cannot think of that day even now without rage. Late in the evening Burn-Murdoch fell back behind our infantry. The last message that I took from Dundonald was that he was opposed, and the last message that I had to send him was to fall back behind the infantry. But Hubert Gough and his squadron went on, Dundonald followed, and this little party rode on to enter Ladysmith in triumph.

On March 1 Buller and several of his staff, including myself, rode into Ladysmith, passing the Intombi internment camp on the way. Several men grasped our hands, and were unable to speak, so happy were they. We met Sir George White, and the two staffs greeted each other. Hunter, Rawlinson, Lawson, Beauchamp-Duff, and others were at Sir George White's table, when he gave us all the fatted calves that Ladysmith had left, and the pleasure of meeting all our old friends again compensated us for all we had gone through. Morgan, our excellent supply officer, had 176 waggons ready with food for the garrison. I was glad indeed to greet Francis Howard, Charlie Fortescue, Rip Metcalfe, and all the gallant fellows of my regiment.

On March 3 the relieving army made its formal entry into Ladysmith, and the garrison lined the streets. The contrast between the two forces was pathetic. Our men were bronzed and hard, certainly dirty, but looking fit

to fight for a kingdom, while the poor garrison were well dressed but very pale and emaciated, and evidently hard beset by want. It was a great day, and though most of us knew that we ought not to have entered the town at all, but should have been hunting the enemy down, it was the close of a chapter, and both the garrison and the relieving force needed a good deal of attention of one sort and another before they were ready to go on.

I was not destined to go on with them. I developed a high fever while we were at the Convent at Ladysmith, and was sent down to Pietermaritzburg, where enteric soon declared itself, and I had a bad time. Dr. Johnstone of Johannesburg and an excellent sister, Nurse Bindloss, pulled me round, but then came jaundice and colitis on the top of it, and after a time I was invalided home. A trip to Carlsbad did me a lot of good, but I was only fit for light duty, and, as I was wanted at Brussels and The Hague, I returned to my old post.

CHAPTER XVI

TOWARD PEACE IN SOUTH AFRICA

When I returned to the continent of Europe I found that the war in South Africa had made us extraordinarily unpopular. The feeling in the Netherlands was most bitter, and it was not very different in Belgium. The Germans used public sentiment and inflamed it. All the bookshops were crammed with anti-English literature, and all the vilest German caricatures had a ready sale, as had all the pro-Boer literature of England. The Government people made no difference in their treatment of us, even if the Queen of the Netherlands used now to make a point of speaking to me last at a reception, but Her Majesty was young, and very properly patriotic, going with her people, and I knew that she sympathised very warmly with the South African Dutch.

The people, however, were more open in their hostility. When I went out in Brussels in uniform the gamins used to shout at me 'Vivent les Boères,' and would even climb on to the step of a carriage and bawl it into the window. Brussels was worse than Holland. The most amusing gibe at our expense, and one that delighted our Minister, Sir Constantine Phipps, was the advertisement of the Brussels laundry lady which he discovered one day. On a huge board was inscribed :

'AUX VAINQUEURS DE LA TUGÉLA
ON REPASSE À TOUTE HEURE.'

The Dutch were not so vocal in their feeling, but it was very deep and strong. They compared the struggle of the Boers with their own war of independence, and in the army and the Court and society public sentiment was all against us.

Dr. Leyds and his mission were at that time still accredited to the two Courts, and consequently we often found ourselves close to them in the circles and Court functions. We mutually ignored each other's existence, and naturally Leyds did not make things any easier for us. Whenever I arrived to call at some house and Leyds was there, he would get up and stalk out. One day he left his tea untouched as I came in, so I took it and said that a Boer convoy was good prize. Leyds was a nice-looking man, and seemed very intelligent.

For a time there was so much work to do, and so many functions to attend, that I could not occupy myself much with the question of the war. There was first the marriage of the Queen of the Netherlands, which was a great event, then the marriage of Prince Albert to his charming Bavarian Princess, and then the burial of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, which I attended officially in charge of the Dutch mission. This latter mournful ceremony was extraordinarily impressive. The masses of people, the solemn silence, the black dresses, the cheerless season, and the dignity of the whole of the proceedings on sea and land made up a never-to-be-forgotten spectacle, while the failure of the gun-team to draw the coffin up the hill from Windsor Station, and the substitution of sailors with drag-ropes, formed an incident which appealed to the imagination and to believers in omens.

At this time, even a blind man could have observed

the efforts of the Germans to keep the Dutch and Belgians apart and to feed the flame of their hostility to us. My view was that the two little countries could easily raise 500,000 men between them, and that such numbers, properly organised, and with a clear understanding that they would stand together, would probably prevent the neutrality and integrity of these States from being attacked. I found a strong desire in this sense to exist in many quarters in Belgium, but unfortunately the condition of the Belgian Army was not such as to make it a strong support, and the neutrality of the little country was a serious impediment to any and every plan of defensive co-operation with the Dutch. The Dutch-Belgian *entente* did not proceed so far or so fast as I desired, but I must say that the real obstacle was much less Belgian military weakness, or want of goodwill, than the neutrality of the country which prevented military understandings, and covered poor Belgium with a false security. This neutrality, we must never forget, was imposed on Belgium from without, and a very great curse her neutrality was, as was afterwards proved.

One of my successors, Colonel Barnardiston, was subsequently accused by the Germans of having planned, or tried to plan, some sort of British aggressive action in Belgium. This he never did. All our interest lay in preserving the neutrality and integrity of the Low Countries, and we never had a thought of any offensive action. The Belgians would never have lent themselves to anything of the sort, nor would our Foreign Office, which always maintained an absolutely correct attitude, and had no thought of aggression from which we had everything to lose and nothing to gain.

A real trouble was that Belgium was extraordinarily

prosperous and happy, and thought that she could go on evading the sacrifices of other people upon their defence. Neither King Leopold nor Prince Albert held this view, nor did the Belgian officers. All these tried again and again to modernise their military institutions, but though things were in rather a better way when war broke out, and Belgium made an honourable defence, she had certainly delayed until too late to take the necessary measures. The Belgian party system was largely to blame for this, but above all the neutrality imposed on Belgium, which made the majority of people consider defence a waste of time and money. It was largely because Belgium maintained her neutrality in the most rigid and uncompromising manner that she made no agreement with her neighbours and friends to provide for her security, and Germany took the meanest advantage of this correct attitude. I told everybody that neutrality did not lessen the need for defence any more than it did for Switzerland, and that the Meuse Valley was one of the great highways between Germany and France. The Belgian Army was manifestly incapable of successfully defending this line unaided, and every Belgian soldier knew it.

My experiences as Military Attaché caused me to consider the situation of our diplomatic representatives abroad and to be dissatisfied with it. I did not think that our system was providing the men we needed in the highest posts, and I soon saw the reason by studying the procedure at our Embassies and Legations. The staff had no responsibility except for chancery work and routine, seldom travelled much in the countries where they lived, and were hardly ever ordered to use their brains and report upon movements of opinion, trade affairs, and all the manifold interests of the country in

which they lived. The minds of the secretaries tended to become sterilised by the humdrum nature of their work, and as this went on perhaps for twenty years before a secretary found himself in a position of real personal responsibility, he was, by this time, often incapable of using the wits which God may originally have given to him.

I thought that the staff at the Foreign Office and at Embassies and Legations should be interchangeable; that councillors and secretaries should be made to travel about and make reports; that second division clerks should be employed in the chanceries on the routine work; and that trade should occupy a much more prominent place and be managed by a Trade Section at the Foreign Office. I thought it indispensable to get the secretaries out of the narrow diplomatic and official circles of the capitals, where they tended to become cave-men, *more Britannico*, and to keep to themselves. The Military Attaché was not uncommonly the man who knew most about the country, because he travelled about and saw all classes of society. There was a real reorganisation needed, and though I fancy that our diplomacy compared favourably with that of other States, this was no reason why it should not become much better.

The position of the Military Attaché was also far from satisfactory. He had two masters, the Foreign Office and the War Office, and if he were accredited to more than one country, as I was, he had more than one Ambassador or Minister to serve besides his other masters. He had no help, and had to copy his own reports and do all the clerking. The chanceries rarely, if ever, offered to help him, and his toil was great. He tended to drop out of the military race if he remained

too long at a foreign capital, a fact certain in the end to prevent the best men from serving in these posts.

I thought at one time that we wanted two Military Attachés in every great country, one to do the really hard military work, and the other to play about in the *salons* and learn all about the social and political side of things. But in the end I thought that the first thing to do was to eliminate the scandalous favouritism which more often than not sent a man out as Military Attaché because he was a society favourite or rich, or had an attractive wife, or was related to Royalty, or for some other equally bad or insufficient reason. The appointments in many cases were indefensible. I saw that the first thing to do was to insist that all prospective M.A.'s should, as a rule, pass two years at least in the Intelligence Branch in London to study all the mass of information available there regarding the country concerned. I thought next that he should not spend more than three years in his foreign country, and that he should have a good clerk to help him in his work. Also I thought that a couple of smart young fellows should go out in turn for a year to serve under the M.A., to devil for him, and to be polished up by contact with Courts and foreigners. By these means I thought that we should secure real efficiency, and acquaint a larger number of officers with foreign manners and customs.

The title of this Chapter shows that my intention was to describe the events which led up to the Dutch Government's Despatch of January 25, 1902, a copy of which was forwarded to the Transvaal Government on March 7 and led to peace in South Africa on May 31. I am unable to obtain permission to describe this interesting page of history, and must therefore reserve it for a later occasion.

I had now finished my military career, and I jotted down the territory that the Old Army had won for the Empire during the quarter of a century of my soldiering. I found that we had increased the Empire by territory equal to the whole area of the United States. Few had noticed it, and no one had said thank you. But I thought that the spirit of Sir Walter Ralegh would be pleased.

CHAPTER XVII

THE TIMES

When I left the Army I wrote some severe strictures on our mismanagement of Army affairs, and this brought me into association with a cave of young Tory dissidents who disapproved strongly of Mr. St. John Brodrick's military policy. They were a clever lot of young men mostly, and included Mr. Ernest Beckett, afterwards Lord Grimthorpe, Mr. Winston Churchill, Major Jack Seely, Lord Hugh Cecil, Sir John Dickson-Poynder, Sir John Gorst, Mr. Harry Cust, Sir Edgar Vincent, Mr. Vicary Gibbs, Mr. Leo Maxse, Mr. Baumann of the *Saturday Review*, Major Evans-Gordon, Mr. Charles Hobhouse, and about a dozen more men who were all more or less dissatisfied with the state of affairs. We used to meet at Ernest Beckett's pleasant house at Virginia Water, and at his flat in Stratton Street, and carried our opposition to Mr. Brodrick into Parliament and the Press. On one occasion this little party carried over thirty members into the lobby to vote against Mr. Brodrick, and frightened the Whips to death. Mr. Balfour told me long afterwards that on the morning of this day his Chief Whip had come to him and had told him that unless he threw over his Secretary for War he would himself be overthrown. But Mr. Balfour replied that he would do nothing of the sort, and that if his War Secretary had to go, he would go too. He came down to the House and supported Mr. Brodrick

most valiantly; the effect of his always inimitable parliamentary powers gave him a sufficient majority.

Our little party desired, at this time, to found an organ which would represent us. We had a great discussion on the subject, and finally, at Mr. Churchill's suggestion, decided that we would call it by the excellent title of *The Gauntlet*, and that we should, being all modest and unassuming people, throw down the gauntlet to all and sundry abuses which afflicted the realm. We divided up the parts which each one of us was to take in this ambitious project, which, had it ever come to maturity, would at least have added to the gaiety of nations, and probably would have kept the Law Courts busy for many months to come. But when we had settled everything else we had to come down to the vexatious but inevitable question of finance; and then we discovered, to our chagrin, that not one of us, nor all of us together, were willing, nor perhaps able, to put down the money to make *The Gauntlet* go. We had collected every sort of capacity except that of the purse, and on this rock our bark unfortunately split. I was deputed to approach Lord Northcliffe and enlist him as our publisher, but he would not hear of it, and so, unfortunately, this brilliant idea came to nothing and perished at its birth.

The first paper for which I began to write regularly was the *Westminster Gazette*, and all my recollections of its wise and competent editor, Mr. J. A. Spender, are most pleasant. Meanwhile I had begun to help Amery with *The Times' History of the War in South Africa*, and was in the midst of it when the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 broke out. I turned on to this, and began a series of articles which gained renown, and one day I saw that the article was headed 'By Our Military Correspondent.'

This had been done without consulting me, and I had therefore succeeded to the platform which Sir George Clarke and Colonel Lonsdale Hale had occupied before me. I objected to the title which practically destroyed the anonymity which I preferred, and made me almost the only writer on *The Times* who could be identified. However, the thing was done, and I was so interested in the war that I did not press my objection. I continued to write my comments on the war until its conclusion in 1905, and must suppose, from all the favourable comments which they aroused at home and abroad, that they created much public interest. I had seen, from the outset, that more useful work could be done by a man who remained at the London nerve-centre than by war correspondents of the old type who sought to repeat the feats of Russell, Archibald Forbes, and Steevens at the seat of war. I knew that they would be shepherded, almost imprisoned, and prevented from telling the truth owing to the regulations which had been established in all armies to muzzle the Press, whereas in London I had no censorship to control me and could speak my mind.

Mr. G. E. Buckle, at that date editor of *The Times*, gave me an extremely free hand, and permitted me to deal not only with the purely military side of the war but with its naval and political aspects as well, and it is to this wise liberty which was accorded me that I attribute mainly the success of my comments. Buckle was a good editor. He had great experience and a broad outlook. He allowed me ample scope, and kept in touch with me by frequent letters. He was a good, sound adviser, and all my recollections of him during the many years that we worked together are most agreeable. He maintained the credit and peculiar dis-

tinction of *The Times* in difficult days. He had sound judgment, and was not a man who could be deflected from his path by influence and pressure. He had the good of the country at heart, and followed it with singleness of mind and purpose. Occasionally I broke out and wrote some acrimonious criticism to him, but he had the sense to see that all writers have the defects of their qualities, and he always managed to smooth me down and to keep me with *The Times*.

Moberly Bell, the manager of *The Times* at this period, was a strong and interesting personality with a wide circle of friends. He wrote the most amusing letters imaginable, and though we wrangled at times and wrote to each other plenty of hard things, we never really fell out. He made a very good thing for *The Times* of a paste-and-scissors book which I compiled from my articles on the war, and the book had a large sale, being the first review of the war as a whole. It was not history, and I would never pretend that it was. But I was able to take each situation as it arose to illustrate the requirements of war on land and sea; and all the best of the critics, British and foreign, were very kind about the articles.

John Walter of Bearwood, then principal proprietor of the paper, was in general control, and had an office in Printing House Square. He was an old friend of mine, and the courtesy and kindness which he, and afterwards his sons, invariably showed to me are among my pleasantest recollections. Valentine Chirol, the Foreign Editor, was a man with wide knowledge of foreign affairs. I appreciated his competence in his own branch. We all got on fairly well together and were a reasonably happy family. I was given a free hand, and never interfered with in my own branch. No one in the

day of the Walters, or since, ever suggested to me either the military policy which I should pursue, or even the subject of an article. My contemporaries in the Army gradually rose to the head of affairs as the years went on, and I remained in close touch with them except when I found myself in opposition to the War Office, when my practice was never to go near it. I always took my own independent line, and though information reached me from all parts of the world, I never consciously allowed any influence or suggestion to prevent me from advocating the course which I considered to be right in the interest of the country and the Army. I fell foul of Tories and Radicals with complete impartiality, and received abuse and praise from each alike in turn.

During the course of the Russo-Japanese War the Esher Committee was hard at work reorganising the War Office, while Mr. Balfour had initiated the Committee of Imperial Defence, two great reforms with which I was heartily in agreement. The Defence Committee was the special appanage of the Prime Minister for the time being, and he called to it whom he would. The chiefs of the great State Departments and the heads of the Navy and the Army, with their advisers, usually attended the Committee, which began to study, for the first time seriously, our naval, military, and other problems of defence, and to co-ordinate the activities of all departments for this purpose. It had a Permanent Secretariat, and records were kept of its proceedings and decisions. It was a valuable institution, and was particularly useful in training up the wild men of politics to understand the dangers of our position and to comprehend the defensive measures necessary to safeguard us. It did much valuable spade-

work of a preparatory character, beginning, for example, by such studies as the defence of India and Egypt. If, as the event will show, it never boldly faced the question of a great continental war, and never prepared for it, the reason must be sought in the complete disbelief of both great political parties that such war would ever come, and in their determination that we should never take serious part in it on the European continent if it came. The chance that such war might be forced upon us by the aggression of a foreign Power was too inconvenient to be considered.

We were very insular. The Government theory that Army depended upon policy—as I constantly urged—was all right if in the word 'policy' we included the policy of other nations. But this we never did. Policy dominated strategy and war organisation as from the nature of things it ever must. Our policy was a policy of peace, and in furtherance of this policy we maintained a strong Navy—which is an essentially defensive service even though it defends by attacking—and we only maintained an Army in the form of a military police to garrison the Empire with a small reserve at home. Behind were the Militia and the Volunteers until Mr. Haldane's time, and by common accord the Unionists and Liberals kept down our military establishments to their lowest terms, grudged all monies for the Army, and would hear nothing of any and every attempt to create a national army on modern lines. The mere mention of conscription and of continental war was received, especially by the Radical Press, with universal execration, and it was under these depressing conditions that soldiers at this time had to build up as best they might such field forces as they could from the few men and the little money at their command. Though

the Tories were theoretically more favourable to Army Reform than the Radicals, I cannot say that there was a row of pins to choose between them upon really fundamental matters. I went on several occasions, several years running, to the political chieftains of the time and asked them to consider whether the time had not come to adopt national service, but I met with nothing but rebuffs, while the leading soldiers refused to accept national service on the lines of Lord Roberts's National Service League, and held out for conscription and two years' service at least. Scarcely a vote would have been obtained in the country for either. Lord Morley was perfectly right in assuring me one day that I should never get the army I wanted until the country was at war. Therefore but little could be done, and when people hereafter look back upon this period and wonder why we were all so blind, they must remember that policy and party advantage dominated everything, and that the country, uninstructed by its statesmen, who deliberately ignored German preparations and ambitions because these were out of the picture of British internal policy, did not care two straws about its Army, and thought of nothing but material comforts and social reforms. To these ideals all statesmen played up, and instead of instructing public opinion, they one and all pandered to it and catered for votes by saying and doing the things that pleased. If the ultimate historian tells us that Lord Roberts was the only statesman of the decades immediately preceding the Great War I shall certainly subscribe to his conclusion, not forgetting that a strong and enthusiastic party of stalwarts followed the Field-Marshal's lead. But they were all voices crying in the wilderness, and few heeded them.

The Esher Committee made an end of the Commander-in-Chief and the old dominance of the Adjutant-General. They framed an Army Council on Admiralty lines, going indeed beyond the Board of Admiralty model, and clothing the Admiralty skeleton with flesh and blood. The change was made with scant courtesy and consideration. Lord Roberts, with his chief colleagues, was bundled out of the War Office most unceremoniously. Generals Lyttelton, Douglas, Wolfe-Murray, and Plumer became the first military members of the Army Council. It was a mistake not to appoint more senior men to the first Army Council, for in the Army rank counts. Mr. Arnold-Forster was appointed Secretary for War towards the close of the Balfour Government, and, unfortunately, he brought to his new Department a scheme of his own for the organisation of the Army, and never succeeded in inducing either the Army Council or the Cabinet to accept it. Arnold-Forster was hard-working, patriotic, and enthusiastic. He had made a special study of the Army and had spoken and written much about it. But he never really understood our problem, and, as he persisted in his scheme, I soon found myself in collision with him.

It is not worth while to recall the somewhat bitter controversy which ensued in 1905 over his still-born project, of which Mr. Haldane subsequently said that he had found a drowned baby and had given it decent interment. It is more pleasant to remember the best thing that this Minister did, namely, to lay the first foundations of the General Staff. I had taken up this subject in *The Times* in May 1905 in two articles, of which the first described fully the German system, and the second pointed out what we had to do. Thanks to

the Esher Committee, and to an Army Order of January 6, 1905, a General Staff had been created on paper, but it had not been created in fact. Pieces of the framework of a General Staff had been juxtaposed awaiting the arrival of some one to fit them together, and many officers, young and old, had been labelled General Staff. But the soul was wanting, and a great work of reform was necessary to create the efficient General Staff and the High School of generalship from which Prussia had profited so much. I therefore pointed out exactly what had to be done to attain this end, which I considered the indispensable prelude of all other military reform. These views obtained general approval, and I was naturally well content when Mr. Arnold-Forster, in his minute of November 11, 1905, addressed to the Chief of the General Staff, practically accepted them all. It was the spirit and not the letter of the German General Staff and of the Napoleonic Staff that I wished to be introduced, an essentially democratic system, establishing no favoured caste, and holding the door open to merit wherever found. I thought that the scheme would attract the best men to the General Staff; that it would in time create settled policy and settled doctrines; that it would prevent the initiation of imprudent and costly experiments, and that it would provide the country with that aristocracy of talent independent of birth, influence, or means which I considered absolutely indispensable for success in modern war. I rejoiced profoundly when I saw that we were at last about to graft upon the rebel British stem the greatest product of the schools of Berthier and of Moltke, and I felt sure that only time and labour were needed to give us at last a real General Staff. It remained for Mr. Haldane to

complete Arnold-Forster's work, but from 1905 onward we went steadily forward, and when the war with Germany came we found ourselves with an organisation and doctrines that served us well. It was the beginning of real reform, and bad indeed would have been our case in the Great War had we been without it.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MILITARY UNDERSTANDING WITH FRANCE

THE defeat of Russia by Japan in the Far East in 1904-5, and the internal upheaval in Russia which followed, brought about a state of affairs very dangerous for the peace of Europe. The bellicose councillors of the German Kaiser did not fail to point out to their master that the dual alliance of France and Russia had suffered grievous hurt in Manchuria, and it is certain that most of them were convinced after the battle of Mukden that the hour for an armed struggle with France had struck.

It was in and through Morocco that these bad councillors sought to find a pretext for war and to drag the still unwilling Kaiser after them. France had explicitly and repeatedly guaranteed the commercial interests of all foreign nations in Morocco, yet in all her endeavours to settle the Morocco question she found Germany drawn up across her path, cajoling, intriguing, menacing, and by the close of December 1905 the danger to peace was very real.

I did not doubt that the increasingly minatory tone of Berlin was due to the disintegration of Russian society which had closely followed defeat in the field. As Russian power waned the tone of German diplomacy waxed correspondingly peremptory. Russia was in a ferment of Revolution. Outlying provinces had become actively disloyal. The machinery of government was

dislocated. Mobilisation and concentration for war in the West had become almost impracticable. On sea and land Russia, as an ally, had almost ceased to count, and as the summer and autumn of 1905 passed along the prospect darkened daily.

We were great fools in those days. We were as blind as bats. Mr. Leo Maxse, who was the reverse, was scoffed at for his pains. I believe that some day the country will acknowledge the debt which it owes to the foresight, independence, and single-minded patriotism of the editor of the *National Review*. The Germans used every means to ingratiate themselves with us, and there began that series of mutual visits and fawnings of Anglo-German statesmen, philanthropists, editors, and Chambers of Commerce which are part of the stock-in-trade of German militant diplomacy and appeal so readily to easy-going, unsuspecting Britishers. All this reached such a pitch towards the end of the year, and the diplomatic situation became so grave, that I published in *The Times*, on December 27, 1905, an article on France and Germany pointing out in plain terms the danger of the situation. I asked our innocents whether they really served the cause of peace by falling on the necks of our German cousins and embracing them. I said that the restoration of friendship between England and Germany was a desirable consummation in itself, but could only be sanctioned and guaranteed by the re-establishment of normal relations between France and Germany, and that this, in its turn, would not be in sight until Germany, at the then approaching Conference of Algeciras, had given convincing proofs that she harboured no designs of aggression, and did not venture to contest the validity of the Anglo-French *entente cordiale* by striking at us with a poisoned Moorish arrow

through France. I said that protestations of our regard for Germany would come better later when they had been deserved. I described them to be, at that moment, inopportune and even dangerous, since they weakened France and were exploited in Germany to encourage German Chauvinism, and added that, far from fulfilling the laudable intentions of their British promoters, they were an indirect incentive to war.

From this I went on to describe the military situation for the purpose of showing up a noisy band of terrorised French politicians who, at this time, began to *battre la chamade* with curious persistence and disciplined unanimity. I gave my reasons for belief in the solidity of the French armies and defensive system, and this was all the easier because French soldiers like Langlois, Zurlinden, Canonge, and Picquart were already busy in the same direction. I concluded a lengthy article by saying that not only were the military consequences of another Franco-German war shrouded in the greatest uncertainty, that not only was the adventure itself attended by almost unbalanced risks, but that Germans had to ask themselves whether they were not endangering their vital interest if they staked upon a doubtful hazard the splendid results achieved by the great founders of German unity. I said no word of menace, except that such a war might unchain animosities in unsuspected quarters.

This article had considerable effect, but the situation remained extremely dangerous until certain decisions were taken in January 1906. It was my purpose to describe in this chapter this most interesting page of history, but again I am forbidden to do so, and must reserve it for a later period when the Censorship is no more.

CHAPTER XIX

ARMY REFORM

When Mr. Haldane became Secretary for War it was certain that there were difficult days in store for the Army. The Liberals had come in with an enormous majority and could do as they pleased. They had been long out of office and out of touch both with practical administration at home and with foreign affairs. They had made the excessive cost of the Army one of the planks of their electioneering platform and were bound to press for military economies. At the same time the glamour of the last war had worn off, and recruits had ceased to present themselves in adequate numbers. We had muddled our recruiting, and although Mr. Brodrick's short-service system was gradually building up our Reserve of the Regular Army, it left us short of drafts for the maintenance of our troops in garrisons abroad. We had a peck of troubles, since we had to try and improve the Army without money and without men, and when M. Cambon said to me one day that this might be difficult, I could not differ from him.

I was very glad when Mr. Haldane went to the War Office. I thought it an act of self-sacrifice on his part, since every War Secretary for many years previously had become unpopular, and there was every sign that a Radical assault on armaments was impending. His Majesty King Edward did much, I believe, to induce Mr. Haldane to accept the thankless task of War

The Rt. Honble. Sidney Herbert,
Afterwards Lord Herbert of Lea.

Secretary, and I am confident that no other leading Liberal at that time could have done the work better, or even half so well. I was pleased because Mr. Haldane belonged to the group of Liberal Imperialists and did not entertain the destructive designs which the left wing of his party harboured against the Army. Mr. Haldane was imperturbable, sagacious, and very hard-working. He was a good judge of men. He had no preconceived ideas on Army matters and gave a hearing to all. He worked with and through the soldiers all the time, carried them with him, and made the War Office a very happy family.

The question for me was what line I should take with regard to Army matters during the administration which had just begun. The sympathies of most officers were for some scheme of national service involving compulsion, such as that of the National Service League. But the most highly-placed soldiers at the War Office would not hear of any training short of two years for infantry, and the general public were not in a mood to accept compulsion in any form, and least of all to look at two years in barracks for their sons. Therefore I had either to become completely hostile to the new Army administration or to do my best to further such changes for the better as were practicable under the really depressing conditions under which Mr. Haldane took office. I decided to take the latter course, though it was the least brilliant part for a critic, because I thought that much could be done with existing means, that a great deal more could be done to utilise voluntary effort than had yet been attempted, and that it would pay the country better to effect these changes than to prolong the phase of instability and disunion that had previously been our curse in military affairs. *The Times*

remained editorially faithful to the principle of compulsion, but allowed me to promote and popularise the many useful and valuable reforms which Mr. Haldane gradually conceived and carried out. Some of us tried, at this time, to reconcile the programme of the National Service League with that of those among us who believed that more could be done with voluntary effort. Our first meeting took place on January 3, 1906, Lords Roberts, Milner, and Hardinge, Mr. St. Loe Strachey, and others for the National Service League, and Sir G. Taubman Goldie, Lord Lovat, Colonel Cave, Major Johnson, myself, and others on the voluntary side. We found at this and other meetings that we were too much apart to go on together, and so we each went our own way, not really separated as to aims, but only as to means and methods. We, on our side, formed the National Defence Association, over which, after Lord Roberts withdrew, first Sir G. Goldie and then Lord Scarbrough presided, and during the years following we had many dinners and meetings at which papers were read and discussions took place, while the National Service League under the Field-Marshal preached national service and did much to prepare opinion for it when it came.

The great danger that we ran at this time was that the victorious Radicals should incontinently so cut down the Army, and so reduce the estimates, that reforms would be out of the question. It was a Cabinet decision at this time that the estimates should be reduced to 28 millions, and when one day I protested against this decision at the House of Commons, various Radicals fell on me and told me plainly that it was only a beginning and that they meant to get the figure down to 25 millions at the most. The reduction of one

battalion of the Guards and eight of the Line by Mr. Haldane followed this decision. They were the babies thrown out of the sleigh to the Radical wolves, and I do not believe that anything less could have temporarily assuaged their hunger. I opposed the reduction, and we all raised a great racket, but actually we had not the recruits to keep up these battalions, and it was only the loss of the cadres that really mattered.

It was necessary to show the public how we stood with regard to the cost of the Army, and this I proceeded to do in *The Times* of July 5, 1906. My argument was as follows: The cost of the Army had risen from 15 millions in 1861 to 29½ millions in 1906. But the gross amount of the annual value of property and profits assessed to Income-tax was 371 millions in 1865 and nearly 903 millions in 1904. We, therefore, had to compare a rise of 15 millions in the cost of the Army in forty-three years with the rise, in ascertained and taxed income alone, of 474 millions in eighteen years. I then pointed out that the annual charge on the National Debt in the year 1815 stood at 32½ millions for a population of 17 millions at that time, and that it was now 30¾ millions for a population of over 42 millions with infinitely greater resources. I showed that the gross liabilities of the State had been 789 millions in 1854 and were now 756 millions; and that whereas our debt one hundred years before had been three times the annual income of the people and one-half of our total capital, it was now 174 millions less than one year's income of the Income-tax-paying classes, and not one-twentieth of our total capital. I showed that the revenue receipts had risen from 79 to 154 millions between 1880 and 1905; that the value of our imports and exports had increased by 271 millions in the last

ten years; that our shipping had grown by 1,200,000 tons in the six years 1898-1904; that our Savings Bank deposits had grown by 59 millions in ten years; that the paid-up capital of registered companies had doubled between 1891 and 1904 and stood at £1,899,000,000, while the amounts cleared annually at the London Banking Clearing House had more than doubled since 1885 and stood at over £12,000,000,000 in 1905. I noticed that the working classes were incomparably better off than they were seventy years before; that they received 50 to 100 per cent. more money for 20 per cent. less work; that they paid less for staple necessities, lived longer, consumed more commodities, were better educated, more free from crime and poverty, and had more to lose by any reduction in the standard of national security than any other class in the country. I concluded that our immense resources justified any expansion of our armaments that our situation demanded.

These figures could not be disputed. They were widely quoted, and taken up as evidence of the success of Free Trade. We heard no more, after their publication, of the excessive cost of the Army, which was the immediate result that I aimed at. The supposed 'mandate' of the new Government to cut down Army estimates was not heard of much more, and as the new Ministers all had prodigal schemes for social reform, a plea of national poverty would have defeated their own ends. Again, at various times, I pointed out that the greatest expansion of the trade of military Powers like Germany had coincided with the period of 'bloated armaments,' and I suggested that moneys spent within a State upon Army and Navy were merely redistribution of wealth and not the drain that they were supposed to

be. All these arguments helped us to get on with Army reform on the limited scale open to us, and I think did some good.

Most people think of Mr. (now Lord) Haldane as the creator of the Territorial Force alone, and forget that his first and most important service to the Army was to organise and complete the Expeditionary Force of six infantry divisions and one of cavalry which fought so gloriously in the Great War. Owing to various deficiencies, particularly in the artillery, it was not possible, when the new Government took office, to place more than two and a half complete divisions in the field. Mr. Haldane began by reverting to the Cardwell system, and re-established service periods which would, at one and the same time, provide us with the drafts that we needed for our normal service abroad and yet build up a good reserve for mobilisation. The new field army was first established by a special Army Order of January 1, 1907, and its numbers on mobilisation were fixed at 6494 officers and 160,200 men. It had 136,159 men of all ranks in its field units, with 456 guns, 168 machine-guns, 62,216 horses, and 7938 vehicles. There were required 2674 officers and 74,918 other ranks to maintain its strength for six months. As the eventual normal strength of the Army Reserve promised to be 115,171 men with the establishments and terms of service which Mr. Haldane fixed, and as the Regular Army at home stood at 120,686 men, we were able to expect that we could not only send out our 17,000 normal and annual drafts to keep up our 72,843 white troops in India, and our 38,352 in the Colonies and Egypt, but also be able, on mobilisation, to fit out the Expeditionary Force and with something to spare. We were short of officers and of reserves to maintain

strengths for six months of war, and to make good this need Mr. Haldane converted the Militia into the Special Reserve and made it available for drafting.

This original establishment of the Expeditionary Force was altered, but not materially, as changes were introduced in it after January 1907. It took time to build it up to its proper strength exclusively with Regular troops. On the whole, there was no great opposition to any part of this scheme except to the conversion of the Militia, but scarcely any one would credit that our Army Reserve would ever grow to the figure mentioned. In this cause I had to break a lance pretty often in jousting with some of the Tory chieftains who were not only incredulous, but even most bitter with me for crediting that the Reserve could ever reach 115,171 men. But I had studied the actuarial calculations carefully and was convinced that it would. As, actually, this Reserve reached the figure of 145,000 by October 1913, I was justified and my critics were not. The Militia proposals aroused more violent controversy, and the change in the character of the force was much disliked by many of the senior officers of the Militia and by the country gentlemen. But it was not possible to give way to them since the Expeditionary Force had to be maintained in the field, and the Militia units were all that we had to find the drafts. Eventually, partly thanks to Lord Salisbury, a compromise was come to, and the Militia in its new form prepared to undertake the magnificent work which it performed in the Great War. Many, if not most, of its battalions, in the course of the first three years, passed 400 officers and 15,000 men into the armies abroad.

A strong First Line and its reserves were now on their way, and Mr. Haldane took up the Second Line which

was in a particularly parlous state, organically considered, but had great promise if it were properly handled, which it never had been. The Volunteers of Great Britain had intelligence, keenness, and numbers. They popularised the use of arms. But they were short of trained officers and instructors, their training was defective, and they had no serious organisation. With an establishment of 339,678 men, they numbered 241,708 including permanent staff on January 1, 1906. They consisted of 223 corps of infantry, 23 of engineers, and 68 of Royal Garrison Artillery. The latter included 366 garrison companies and 127 heavy batteries with 460 guns. The batteries were armed with guns which were, to a large extent, antiquated and unsuitable for a field army. The infantry corps numbered anything from 1 to 18 companies each, and though the corps were distributed among brigades, these were very irregularly constituted. The Volunteers, in short, were an almost inchoate mass of units, without sufficient field or machine-guns, without field, bridging, or telegraph companies of engineers, and without means for ensuring medical, transport, supply, ordnance, or pay services. But they had great merits, and they were ripe for the hand of the reformer.

It was a task of great administrative complexity not only to create a new organisation and provide the many needs of the force, but also to settle all the debts and liabilities of corps and to place the whole Volunteer Force on a business basis. In the course of the next few years there was evolved from this chaos a military organisation of 14 infantry divisions and 14 mounted brigades of Yeomanry besides special troops. The artillery, engineers, and auxiliary services were gradually found, regular officers were appointed to the Commands

and Staffs, real mobile field forces came into existence, all the archaic corps rules, regulations, and financial systems of the past were swept away, and we began to see the possibility of expanding the Regular Forces in the field in case of need, although no express liability rested on the Territorials to serve abroad. The creation of the County Associations, another important reform, enlisted the business brains and the county sentiment in aid of the new Territorial Force, and King Edward gave the movement a great send-off at Buckingham Palace on October 26, 1907.

I had great difficulties to contend with during the passage of the Territorial and Reserve Forces Act of 1907 through Parliament and subsequently. The Tories hardened against the Bill, and they naturally fastened on the shortness of the Territorial training, and were particularly opprobrious on the subject of Territorial artillery, which, they said, could never be of any use. It was very hard work to defend the Territorials then, though they need no defending now since they have so gloriously defended us. So far as training was concerned I was clear that with voluntary service and in the existing conditions of employment we could not go beyond a maximum period of fifteen-day camps, and many corps, or at least individuals, could not give more than eight days in camp. But I believed that the number of drills put in by the men, exclusive of the camps, would bring up the general standard of efficiency to a higher level than most people expected. I thought that there was much to be hoped from the intelligence of the classes recruited, and that, as we were taking the Territorials seriously, they would respond. But I hope that I exaggerated nothing, and I openly stated that if our circumstances required that the Territorials should

take the field with credit against an equal number of foreign troops immediately after mobilisation, we had to admit that with conditions as they were they could not do it. We went so far as we could with voluntary service. This was all that I claimed.

As to the Territorial artillery, all the experts were in opposition and scoffed at it. I gave reasons for differing from them in *The Times* of April 16, 1908. I said that we were working with an eye to future developments, and proposing to create something that might serve as an army of expansion if the Regulars ever found themselves in a tight place overseas. I thought that it would be a disadvantage, in such case, that we should then find our Territorial infantry without its proper complement of guns. It would have been difficult to find the artillery on a Regular basis without enlisting some 25,000 additional Regular artillery, which seemed impracticable. We could not supply the new Q.F. material without an initial expenditure of £3,618,000, which the Treasury would not grant, but meanwhile the 15-pounder could be converted into a fairly effective weapon at a cost of £1200 per battery, and it stood comparison with the German field gun in range and muzzle velocity. I thought it a sound idea to raise the batteries; that, by the plan proposed, they would be raised in the quickest time and at the least cost; that there was reasonable hope that they would attain a certain degree of efficiency, and that they could be re-armed later. No alternative plan for a second-line artillery was produced by the critics. My general opinion was that no part of the Territorial Force could become perfectly efficient in time of peace, judged by the standards of the Regular Army, but that each part might be so well trained as to allow it to become

efficient within a few months after embodiment, and I saw no reason why the artillery should differ in this respect from any other arm.

I not only supported the Territorials whenever they were attacked, but went round the country each year up to the outbreak of the Great War to see a certain number of infantry divisions and mounted brigades at their camps, and attended artillery practices, gradually becoming acquainted with nearly the whole of the new Force. I saw what I had expected to see. The strong infusion of Regular elements in the Commands and Staffs —which attracted first-rate men like Sir Charles Monro and Sir Stanley Maude—better courses of instruction for cadres, more generally level training, and the satisfaction felt by all ranks at the possession of artillery, auxiliary services, and a distinct mission in the defence of the country, soon raised the spirit, improved the quality, and enhanced the prestige of the new Army in second line. Our splendid Yeomanry fitted into the scheme to perfection. Sir Henry Mackinnon and then Sir John Cowans brought the Force through all its infant troubles. I was well contented with all I saw, and when the last great reform of Mr. Haldane gave us some 20,000 cadets of his new Officers' Training Corps at a Windsor review, I thought that the country owed a great debt to its War Minister for obtaining the utmost that voluntary service was able to give.

The abuse showered on me for supporting Mr. Haldane during his long administration never caused me to diverge by a hair's-breadth from the policy which I had mapped out for myself. Even the Tory critics manned the Associations, commanded the regiments, and belied their criticisms by their patriotic acts. I cannot help laughing now at the remembrance of the Radicals troop-

ing into one lobby to place the Second Line under the County families, and of the Tories trooping into the other lobby to prevent it. I enjoyed the controversies, bitter though they often were, of this time. I hope that I gave as good as I got, but if I did not I was fully avenged when the Expeditionary Force went abroad so silently and so swiftly to save France from ruin; when the Special Reserve completed their ranks not once but many times; when the Officers' Training Corps recruited the commissioned ranks, and when the much-criticised Territorials took over the defence of our foreign possessions, including India, provided defence at home, and then, division by division, went out to fight in all the theatres of war and quickly became indistinguishable from Regulars, gathering laurels wherever they went. I thought myself justified in Mr. Haldane's military children whom I had supported, and only regretted that the man, above all others, to whose ability and patience we owed the forces which withstood the Hun enemy in the gates should have been consigned by the cruelty of the times to vilification and abuse.

I am not saying that no mistakes were made at this time, even within the limits rigorously assigned to Mr. Haldane, namely, voluntary service, and approximately 28 millions a year for the Army. There were three important mistakes made. If the Liberals and Labour men had supported the Territorial Force, I think that we might easily have had a million of them when war broke out. Scarcely one of his colleagues and very few of his party actively supported Mr. Haldane. They trimmed their sails to profit by his success if he succeeded, and to drop him if he failed. I recall just one speech by Sir Edward Grey, one by Mr. Lloyd George

in Wales, and one by Mr. Churchill. For the rest, silence, and on the Labour side certainly no encouragement, and positive hostility from the Trade Unions. Secondly, we were short of heavy guns in our Expeditionary Force and felt their want badly in the war. I pointed out the deficiencies of our heavy artillery in *The Times* on August 10, 1907, but nothing was done. This deficiency was due to the fact that it was supposed by certain soldiers that the war against Germany would be decided by the fighting of some seven great battles *en rase campagne*, where heavies would be a positive encumbrance. Third, and worst of all, we took no steps to create a great reserve of rifles. I had been anxious on this subject and had examined it. One day I gave Sir George Goldie the figures to read out to the National Defence Association. It was in 1908. We then had 866,367 long and short ·303 magazine rifles, these figures representing the rifles in the hands of our troops at home and abroad, with a reserve of 50 per cent. for Regulars and 33 per cent. for Auxiliary Forces. The maximum output of rifles, including ordnance factories and the trade, was only 285,000 rifles a year, and of S.A.A. 12 million rounds a week working day and night. These figures showed that we had not even considered the possibility of a *levée en masse*. They were given to me privately and I could not use them in the Press. England should never be without five million rifles again. The history of our rifles during the Great War, as of our shells, is a tragedy, and I shall have more to say about it in a future volume.

CHAPTER XX

BLUE WATER AND INVASION

One of the things that I had early set myself to do was to combat the prevalent heresy that our Navy could do everything and that our Army was of little account. The great works of the American Captain, afterwards Admiral, Mahan, and particularly his *Influence of Sea Power upon History*, had aroused the greatest interest and enthusiasm in England, particularly in the Navy, which saw, almost for the first time, the great services of its past heroes explained in a clear and attractive manner. To these works of Mahan we owed much, but, unfortunately, others owed more. The secret of our world power stood revealed, and there began, all over the world, and especially in Germany, a race for naval power which did not indeed deprive us of our supremacy at sea, but left us no longer in a position to confront all combinations with equanimity.

The worst of it was that a great many writers on naval affairs in England, not sailors for the greater part, but amateurs and doctrinaires with a soldier or two thrown in, began to embroider on the Mahan theme and to prostitute it. They proved to their own satisfaction that 'a fleet in being' was an absolute bar to invasion across the seas, and though Mahan later on tore this theory to ribbons, and it was discredited by subsequent events, it did much to make people believe that the Navy was our all in all and our Army almost

an encumbrance. The doctrinaires egged each other on, and, as there was only a very little money to go round between the Services, the Army became more and more starved and less considered.

We could not at this time so much as hint that we might ever be engaged upon the continent of Europe, because we were immediately treated to every kind of abuse for suggesting such a thing, and no one would look at any argument founded upon it. Our engagements to Belgium were regarded as ancient history, and nobody thought about them, or understood what they meant. So I fell back upon the hearth-and-home idea, and thought that I should have little difficulty in showing that, even from this point of view, we should be inadequately defended in the absence of the Expeditionary Force unless we retained strong forces at home as we had done in all our great wars, whether in the days of Elizabeth, Chatham, or the younger Pitt.

I began this campaign in *The Times* of August 29, 1906, by a study of Moltke's views on oversea invasion, taking the events of 1864 as a text. I showed by this example that the greatest strategist of modern times was prepared, when Prussia was practically without a fleet, to order an Army Corps to be towed by night across waters which he did not and could not hope to command, for the purpose of subjugating an armed and insular State, and I illustrated my article by quotations from Moltke's writings.

The next historical instance which I took up was that of the French General Humbert's raid on Ireland in 1798, and my article on this subject appeared on November 8 and 13, 1906. I showed that a raiding party of 1000 French had landed in Ireland after sixteen days of navigation, without opposition and

unobserved by the British Navy; that it defeated and drove back the British troops opposing it on four separate occasions; routed a force of second-line troops of double its strength; captured eleven British guns; held the field for seventeen days; entirely occupied the attention of all the available troops of a garrison of Ireland 100,000 strong; penetrated almost to the centre of the island, and compelled the Lord-Lieutenant to send an urgent requisition to London for 'as great a reinforcement as possible.'

I went on with three other examples, namely, Savary's voyage in 1798, Hoche's expedition in 1796, and Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt in 1798, all in the face of superior British naval forces. I gave full details of the latter operation and of the proceedings of Nelson and of his frigates, and drew from all these incidents the conclusion that in the old wars we were not able to count upon either the observation or the interception of maritime expeditions, even when our admirals were well placed, had fortune favoured them, to observe in the first place, and then to destroy, the hostile armaments.

I discussed the whole problem of invasion in the *National Review* of November of 1907, and read a paper on 'German Naval Policy' before the National Defence Association in May of the same year. In this paper I traced the development of the German Navy from its first beginnings, showed that there were then 256 German warships built and building, and stated the naval and military arrangements which seemed to me desirable on our side. In the same order of ideas I discussed the Channel Tunnel project in *The Times* of January 2 and 3, 1907, described the history of the scheme from its inception, gave details of the engineering problems connected with it, summarised old and new

arguments *pro* and *con*, and concluded that the construction of a tunnel was inadmissible from a soldier's point of view until we had created a national army in these islands.

On November 20, 1906, I read a paper on 'The Blue Water School' before the National Defence Association, in which I gibbeted the doubtful theories of the doctrinaires who had embroidered on Mahan. I am afraid that it hurt them, but the hardened publicist who speaks his mind has to put up with these little sorrows. A military critic who does not lose one valued friend a month should reconsider his position. I showed in my paper that the territorial and maritime security provided by supremacy at sea was not absolute but only relative. I noticed that seven-eighths of the population of our Empire resided on continental and not on insular territory; I referred to the past and the present; and concluded that even a supreme Navy could not profit by its victories, could not impose peace, and could not save its own country from terrible and prolonged sufferings, unless a National Army was ready to complete and confirm the victories won at sea. We had a good attendance this evening. Lord Roberts presided and there was a large gathering, including Mr. Balfour, Mr. Walter Long, Sir Charles Dilke, Admirals Sir Gerald Noel, Bridge, and Custance, General Sir William Nicholson, Lord Lovat, General Mackinnon, Colonel Aston, Mr. Mackinder. We had a capital discussion in which all the above took part. The paper was published in *The Times*, but as we had no reporters present the discussion was not reported, and this was a pity as it was most illuminating.

In all this campaign Field-Marshal Lord Roberts backed me up and heartily concurred. But it was only

the beginning of the work, and in order to impose action upon the Government we had to move the official circles and to convince the Defence Committee that our arrangements were inadequate. The starting-point of the inquiry into this matter made by Lord Roberts, Lord Lovat, Sir Samuel Scott, and myself, was the speech delivered in the House of Commons by Mr. Balfour on May 11, 1905, when, after hypothecating that our Regular Army was abroad and our organised fleets absent from home waters, Mr. Balfour affirmed that 'the serious invasion of these islands was not a possibility that we need consider.' For the purposes of his argument Mr. Balfour had assumed France to be the enemy. I had severely criticised this speech when it was made, and had pointed out that the French Navy was nowhere mentioned in the speech, this omission alone vitiating, as I thought, all the argument.

The effect of this speech was disastrous, whether to those who, like Lord Roberts, were preaching national service, or to those others among us who were endeavouring to raise a second-line army by voluntary means. We were all constantly met by the objection—'Why should we serve? Mr. Balfour says that invasion is impossible.' How far from impossible the French thought it will be judged when I am permitted to complete Chapter XVIII., and Lord Roberts and we who were acting with him in this matter totally differed from Mr. Balfour's arguments and conclusions. We thought, besides, that the case of Germany was different, and in order to ascertain the facts we began to make certain preliminary investigations into the facilities possessed by Germany for invasion oversea. We embodied these in the form of notes and sent them to Mr. Balfour with the statement that we were convinced that our security was much less

than the public had been led by him to believe. A meeting was arranged between us and Mr. Balfour, who brought Lord Lansdowne and Lord Cawdor with him. We stated our case, and Mr. Balfour undertook, if he found that we had made out a *prima facie* case, to write to the Defence Committee and to see what could be done to have the subject of invasion freshly considered. This he duly did in the following month, and though the Admiralty objected most strongly to a fresh investigation, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman decided that it should be held and that our case should be heard.

I am not permitted to refer to the steps subsequently taken by the Field-Marshal and by those who acted with him. All that I can say is that the inquiry lasted for more than a year and a half, and that the decision of the Committee was announced by Mr. Asquith, who had presided with much tact and good judgment, on July 29, 1909, in the House of Commons. Mr. Asquith declared that it was 'the business of the War Office to see that we have in all circumstances a properly organised and properly equipped force capable of dealing effectively with a possible invasion by 70,000 men,' and this remained the official basis of home defence, so far as I know, up to the outbreak of the Great War.

The Government found, after some years had passed, that the standard which they had fixed was inconvenient, and a fresh inquiry was ordered. The same little party which had acted with the Field-Marshal before feared that the intention was to lower the standard of security, and consequently we presented a fresh paper at the inquiry in 1913, showing that the German Army and Navy had greatly increased since 1909, and that submarines and aircraft had made our

position worse. Into these matters we entered fully on the lines of my *Blackwood*[1] articles, incorporating later changes. The war came on us before the 1913 Report was announced. It is true that when the war came it did not come in the form that we were considering, namely, a fight between England and Germany alone, and therefore part of our arguments was not germane to the case that actually arose, but Lord Roberts's views are so valuable that I hope some day the Government or the Field-Marshal's descendants will publish them for the benefit of those who come after us. I can only publish in an Appendix a part of a Memorandum which I wrote before the first Inquiry began in 1907.

Lord Roberts earnestly desired, and so did I, to tackle the Defence Committee on the much larger questions of military policy which came upon us in an acute form when the war began. We were never given the chance. We had inquiries into compartmental war—Invasion, India, Egypt, and so forth—but never, to my knowledge, into defence as a whole. The Cabinets of those days would not look at the big things that lay behind the alliances and groupings of Powers and our treaty obligations to Belgium and other States. They were not fit subjects to drag into the sun because their honest investigation would have entailed a radical change in the military policy of the country, and that change no Party was prepared to face.

[1] See Chapter XXII.

CHAPTER XXI

THE KAISER'S LETTER TO LORD TWEEDMOUTH

At the beginning of the year 1908 I had become anxious about our naval policy. The creation of the Dreadnought type of battleship threatened to make the pre-Dreadnought types obsolete, and Germany was starting out on a great programme of construction which would menace our position unless we were vigilant and active. We were neither. According to information given to me, our Navy Estimates for 1908-9, instead of being increased, had been twice cut down in the Cabinet, and there was a strong party in the House of Commons bent on forcing the Navy Estimates still further down.

It was at this moment, in the last week of February 1908, that I learnt that the Kaiser had addressed a letter to Lord Tweedmouth on the subject of our own and the German naval policy. This letter appeared to me to be an insidious attempt to influence, in German interests, a British First Lord, and at a most critical moment, namely, just before the Estimates were coming on in Parliament. My view was that the despatch of such a letter was unconstitutional in principle and calculated to destroy the safeguards that legitimate diplomacy provides. I thought that Lord Tweedmouth was placed at a serious disadvantage by the Imperial favour and would be greatly embarrassed to state his candid opinion either to the Kaiser, or, after his letter,

WILLIAM II.
(*From Laszlo's Portrait,* 1909.)

to Parliament. It seemed to me a public duty to expose this proceeding in order to prevent its recurrence, and this seemed all the more necessary considering the weakening of our Government at a moment when firmness was absolutely indispensable.

I thought the matter over and then consulted my editor, Buckle, and Valentine Chirol. We had considerable discussion. The accuracy of my information was confirmed from other sources. We knew that the publication of a letter on the subject would cause much excitement, and we had to reckon up all the consequences. But after thinking over the matter for a week we decided to expose the Kaiser, and on March 6, 1908, Buckle published the following letter from me in *The Times*:

'UNDER WHICH KING?'

To the Editor of The Times.

'SIR,—I consider it my duty to ask you to draw the attention of the public to a matter of grave importance.

'It has come to my knowledge that His Majesty the German Emperor has recently addressed a letter to Lord Tweedmouth on the subject of British and German naval policy, and it is affirmed that this letter amounts to an attempt to influence, in German interests, the Minister responsible for our Navy Estimates.

'The letter is undoubtedly authentic, and a reply to it has been despatched.

'In these circumstances, and as the matter has become an open secret owing to the number of persons to whom it has, most unwisely and unfortunately, been made known, I venture to urge that the letter in question,

together with the reply, should be laid before Parliament without delay.—I am, etc.,

'YOUR MILITARY CORRESPONDENT.'

March 4.

Buckle supported the letter in a strong leader, and almost immediately there was a tremendous hubbub and every newspaper in the kingdom began to talk about it. On the whole, we had a bad Press, which was comforting, for when the majority of people in England think something they are generally wrong. It was given out that the letter was 'private and personal,' and the Government rode off on this horse, but naturally without publishing the letter which would have shown up the falsity of the plea. Mr. Asquith was nervous when he came down to the House of Commons to answer questions about the correspondence for which he disclaimed Cabinet responsibility. He had evidently seen the letter and was alarmed lest a demand for publication should be pressed. The House of Lords was packed when Lord Tweedmouth rose to make a statement. All the galleries were crowded and a mass of members from the Lower House had trooped in to hear the First Lord's explanation. He restricted himself to few sentences, and repeated that the letter was private and personal. Lord Lansdowne followed him and made a fairly good and sarcastic speech, but Lord Rosebery, who wound up, was less happy. He reminded the House that the German Army was the German people, and said that the German Government could only have the support of the nation in a war against Great Britain when the feelings of Germany had been so exasperated as to render peace impracticable. As a forecast of 1914, this statement was not prophetic. The famous letter, which

was ultimately published by the *Morning Post* on October 30, 1914, ran as follows :

Copy of Letter from the Kaiser to Lord Tweedmouth.

'BERLIN, 14*th*/2, 1908.

'MY DEAR LORD TWEEDMOUTH,—May I intrude on your precious time and ask for a few moments' attention to these lines I venture to submit to you.

'I see by the daily papers and Reviews that a battle Royal is being fought about the needs of the Navy. I therefore venture to furnish you with some information anent the German Naval Programme which it seems is being quoted by all parties to further their ends by trying to frighten the peaceable British tax-payer with it as a bogey.

'During my last pleasant visit to your hospitable shores I tried to make your Authorities understand what the drift of the German Naval policy is. But I am afraid that my explanations have been either misunderstood or not believed, because I see the "German Danger" and the "German Challenge to British Naval Supremacy" constantly quoted in the different articles. This phrase if not repudiated or corrected sown broadcast over the country and daily dinned into British ears might in the end create most deplorable results. I therefore deem it advisable as Admiral of the Fleet to lay some facts before you, to enable you to see clearly.

'It is absolutely *nonsensical* and *untrue* that the German Naval Bill is to provide a Navy meant as a "challenge to British Naval Supremacy." The German Fleet is built *against* nobody at all. It is solely built for Germany's needs in relation with that country's rapidly growing trade. The G. Naval Bill was sanc-

tioned by the Imperial Parliament and published 10 years ago, and may be had at any large booksellers. There is nothing surprising, secret or underhand in it, and every reader may study the whole course mapped out for the development of the German Navy with the greatest ease. The law is being adhered to and provides for about 30-40 ships of the line in 1920. The number of ships fixed by the Bill included the fleet then actually in commission, notwithstanding its material being already old and far surpassed by the contemporary types in the other foreign navies. The extraordinary rapidity with which improvements were introduced in types of battleships, armaments and armour made the fleet in commission obsolete before the building programme providing the *additions* to it was half finished. The obsolete fleet had to be struck off the list, thus leaving a gap lowering the number of ships below the standard prescribed by the Bill. This gap was stopped by using the finished ships to *replace* the obsolete ones *instead* of being *added* to them as originally intended. Therefore instead of steadily increasing the "standing" fleet by regular additions it came to a *wholesale rebuilding* of the *entire* German Navy. Our actual programme in course of execution is practically only an *exchange* of old material for new, but *not* an *addition* to the number of units originally laid down by the Bill 10 years ago, which is being adhered to.

'It seems to me that the main fault in the discussions going on in the papers is the permanent ventilating of the so-called 2-3 or more power standard and then only exemplifying on *one* power, which is invariably Germany. It is fair to suppose that each nation builds and commissions its Navy according to its *needs*, and

not only with regard to the programme of other countries. Therefore it would be the simplest thing for England to say: I have a world-wide Empire, the greatest trade of the world, and to protect them I must have so-and-so many battleships, cruisers, etc.—as are necessary to guarantee the supremacy of the sea to me, and they shall accordingly be built and manned. That is the absolute right of your country and nobody anywhere would lose a word about it and wether it be 60 or 90 or 100 battleships that would make no difference and certainly no change in the German Naval Bill! May the numbers be as you think fit. Everybody here would understand it, but people would be very thankful over here if at last Germany was left out of the discussion. For it is very galling to the Germans to see their country continually held up as the sole danger and menace to Britain by the whole press of the different contending parties; considering that other countries are building too, and there are even larger fleets than the German.

'Doubtless when party faction runs high there is often a lamentable lack of discrimination in the choice of the weapons; but I really must protest that the "German Naval Programme" should be the only one for exclusive use, or that such a poisoned one should be forged as the "German Challenge to British Supremacy of the Sea." If permanently used mischief may be created at home, and injured feeling engendering the wish for retaliation in the circles of the German Naval League as a representative of the nation; which would influence public opinion and place the Government in a very disagreeable position by trying to force it to change its programme, through undue pressure difficult to ignore.

'In the letter Lord Esher caused to be published a

short time ago he wrote "that every German from the Emperor down to the last man wished for the downfall of Sir John Fisher." Now, I am at a loss to tell wether the supervision of the foundations and drains of the Royal Palaces is apt to qualify somebody for the judgement of Naval Affairs in general. As far as regards German Affairs Naval the phrase is a piece of unmitigated balderdash, and has created an immense merriment in the circles of those "who know" here. But I venture to think that such things ought not to be written by people who are high placed, as they are liable to hurt public feelings over here. Of course I need not assure you that nobody here dreams of wishing to influence Britain in the choice of those to whom she means to give the direction of her Navy, or to disturb them in the fulfillment of their noble task. It is expected that the choice will always fall on the best and ablest and their deeds will be followed with interest and admiration by their brother officers in the German Navy. It is therefore preposterous to infer that German Authorities work for or against persons in official positions in foreign countries, it is as ridiculous as it is untrue and I hereby repudiate such a calumny. Besides to my humble notion this perpetual quoting of the "German Danger" is utterly unworthy of the great British nation with its world-wide Empire and its mighty Navy; there is something nearly ludicrous about it. The foreigners in other countries might easily conclude that the Germans must be an exceptionally strong lot as they seem to be able to strike terror into the hearts of the British, who are 5 times their superiors!

'I hope your Lordship will read these lines with kind consideration. They are written by one who is an

ardent admirer of your splendid Navy, who wishes it all success, and who hopes that its ensign may ever wave on the same side as the German Navy's, and by one who is proud to wear the British Naval Uniform of an Admiral of the Fleet, which was conferred on him by the late Great Queen of blessed memory.

'Once more. The German Naval Bill is not aimed at England, and is *not* a "challenge to British Supremacy of the Sea," which will remain unchallenged for generations to come. Let us remember the warning Admiral Sir John Fisher gave to his hearers in November when he so cleverly cautioned them not to get scared, by using the admirable phrase "If Eve had not allways kept her eye on the apple, she would not have eaten it, and we should not now be bothered with clothes."

'I remain, Yours truly,

(Sd.) 'WILLIAM, I.R.,

'*Admiral of the Fleet.*'

Can any one now affirm, after reading this letter, that it can accurately be described as private? My description of it was accurate, and had the letter been published at the time we should have been very amply justified. But our object was not to embroil England and Germany but to warn the Kaiser off the grass, and to fire a shot among the Radical wild geese who were preventing the Cabinet from doing its duty. We listened with calmness to the shrieks of the Radicals, who trembled for their emoluments, that we were base to reveal a private letter, and we watched with interest the German manœuvres to discredit us and distort the meaning of the letter. It was half-promised in Germany that the letter should be made public, but we had no illusions on this subject, and, as for Lord Tweedmouth's

reply, it never came out. We were content because our object was achieved, and we had no desire to create bad blood with Germany if the Kaiser would learn to mind his own business and to leave us to mind ours. Six weeks later Lord Tweedmouth was out of office. There was no more talk of reducing the Navy Estimates. Mr. M'Kenna became First Lord, and the Government had received such a shock that he was given a free hand. He dealt honestly by the country, and it is largely thanks to him and his Board of Admiralty that we eventually stood in a good position as regards capital ships when the war came on us. I have never revealed to a soul the source of my information on this matter. An account of the steps taken by the Cabinet to acquaint the Kaiser with their view of his interference in our affairs I must leave to a later volume of these memoirs.

CHAPTER XXII

STORM WARNINGS

A MILITARY critic of one of the great London daily papers finds his hands full and can never afford to be idle. I had to keep touch with all foreign armies and military systems as well as with our own, to watch the tendencies of policy abroad, to follow and discuss all military happenings in India and the Dominions, and to visit our camps and manœuvres, staff rides, and tactical exercises. The view of Clausewitz that 'the art of war extends with indeterminate limits in every direction' will appeal forcibly to any one whose duty it becomes to be a watchdog of the public in things relating to their peace. In the course of these duties I visited several foreign armies and became acquainted with their leaders and their troops, while at home I saw much in the summer of our chief commanders, including nearly all who have since distinguished themselves in the Great War. Occasionally I read papers and made speeches, but as seldom as possible, and when I wished to advocate reform I usually had recourse to *The Times*. I found myself quoted and discussed in the Press of all the world. The French General Staff organ had described me as the *véritable educateur militaire* of the British public, and comments on my opinions came from all sides. This was flattering, but was a bore, for it compelled me to limit myself to what I may call regular warfare, when all my inclinations were for the war of a free lance.

The Navy was so much and so intimately bound up with the Army in all defence problems that I was deeply interested in it, but I could not write much about it personally as I had naval colleagues whose sphere I could not trespass upon. But there were some naval affairs that bore on military policy and could not be ignored, so I invented my good friend Colonel von Donner und Blitzen to give me the German views of our naval proceedings, and set him to work first upon the famous 'Admiralty Notes' initialed by Admiral Wilson in 1910, and next upon the manœuvres of 1912 and 1913 when our Red and Blue Fleets took the rôles of England and Germany in a naval war, and it was hoped to prove that no invasion could succeed. This proof the manœuvres failed to afford, or so at least it seemed to me, though no official report saw the light, and the German colonel had a good deal of scope for criticism and sarcasm, much to the horror of the *Kreuz Zeitung* and other Junker papers which nearly burst with rage about this correspondence, and were deeply concerned because they could not find the colonel's name in their *Rangsliste*. A sense of humour was never a strong point with the Huns.

I thought that our naval officers and seamen were the finest fellows in the world, and the most perfect masters of navigation, the torpedo, and the gun. The British ship-unit was a beautiful thing, and the spirit was perfectly admirable. But there was no mind, no appreciation of war's needs, no staff work, no doctrine, no strategy, and no naval tactics. The British Navy produced little or nothing in the way of literature to lighten the darkness, and to explain to the public what was wanted and why it was wanted. Our Army staff officers who attended naval manœuvres all came back

with identical tales, namely, that the Navy was the most glorious service in the world, and knew everything about fighting but nothing about war. The old admirals ruled everything, and did not look much further than Duncan's tactics at Camperdown for their models. They kept down all the ardent spirits, made ridiculous dispositions of their fleets, were for long, even during part of the Great War, without safe bases in the North Sea, suppressed the people who cried out for dirigibles, nearly placed the young submarine officers under arrest when they insulted authority by torpedoing a flagship, and in general were the most conservative people imaginable. All this made me anxious, particularly as sailors thought highly of the German Navy, and certain officers of other navies told me that ship for ship the Germans were better than we were. With some of our venerable notions Colonel von Donner und Blitzen ventured to deal in German-English interspersed with fragments of his native tongue. He was set upon, much belaboured, and hit back.

But there was one subject which I took up in *Blackwood* under my own name when I wrote two articles in 1910 under the title of 'New Wars for Old.' This subject was the submarine and aircraft, arms which I thought were destined to revolutionise war, and I wrote about them in May and June 1910, four years before Admiral Sir Percy Scott wrote his famous letter on the same subject. I had studied the use of the torpedo and the mine in the Russo-Japanese War, and had frequently stated my opinion that these arms, combined with surprise, would have the German preference when war came. The Germans did not take up the submarine very early, but when they did they went full steam ahead with it, and I watched them closely. I studied the

submarine and the new torpedoes, and was much aided by Captain Sueter's book on this subject, one of the best works of the young school. I did not see how the submarine could be combated with any certainty by naval means, and therefore I believed, and said in the *Blackwood* articles, that, when sufficiently numerous, these new craft must dominate narrow waters and practically forbid them to sea-going fleets. It seemed to me that the submarine was an instrument of deadly menace, and that we had discovered no means to combat it effectually. My view was that they would not only have a more or less free run of their teeth, but also be able to lay mines round England, almost as they pleased. I therefore thought and said that the North Sea would eventually become no place for a sea-going fleet, and that all our naval finery would have to be stored away safely in some distant and secluded anchorage. I suggested Scapa Flow and Portsmouth to-day, Berehaven and Lough Swilly to-morrow, while they left the flotillas to carry on the war.

I further showed that the idea that we could make the five-fathom line off the enemy's coast our frontier, as we did in the old wars, and that we could easily carry out joint operations against the enemy's coasts and islands, which I understood was the idea of Admirals Fisher and Wilson, was a strategy resurrected from the dead past, as dead indeed as Queen Anne. I had pointed out in *Blackwood* in 1903, eleven years before the Great War began, the advantages of using the Orkneys as a fleet base for controlling the waters extending thence by the Shetlands to Norway, and I thought that if we held our main fleets at the Orkneys and blocked the Straits of Dover, we should blockade the German enemy better than off his own coast, and

compel him, if he desired to free himself from our potent strategic embrace, to cross the North Sea and challenge us at home. I thought that the mine, the improved torpedo, the submarine, the destroyer, the airship, wireless telegraphy, and long-ranging coastal ordnance had revolutionised the conditions of operations off an enemy's coast against an enemy who was prepared, and that strategy, whether it liked it or not, had to take count of a new situation.

I recommended the preparations to suit the idea of keeping our battle-fleets out of harm's way and leaving the flotillas to carry on the war until the German Fleets put to sea. These were, numerous bases for destroyers and submarines all along the east coast, repairing vessels and floating docks, storage for gasoline and petroleum, charging stations for electric batteries and for air, and slipways to enable vessels to be cleaned and tanks overhauled. I thought that trade would be largely diverted in war-time to our southern and western ports, owing to the submarine menace all along the east coast, and as these veins were not prepared to fulfil the functions of arteries, I prophesied a great rise in the price of all foodstuffs and fuel, and great sufferings among rich and poor alike. I said that nothing we could do could, with any certainty, prevent German submarines, to which I allowed a radius of action of 1000 miles, from putting to sea when they pleased and from appearing off our coasts at their own sweet will. I suggested those poaching expedients, the 'cross line' and the 'otter,' for adaptation to naval use to combat submarines; and in my second article, which dealt with the future of aircraft, I stated that superiority in the air had become an imperative obligation to the State which desired to command at sea, and I laid stress on the advantages

which Germany would derive from her aircraft and the damage which they were sure to do to us, both in scouting and bombing. It was aircraft, I said, that promised to play the part of the gull to the submarine fish, and offered the best hope for mitigating, if not for ending, the severe strain which I thought would be imposed upon a Navy by the submarine menace.

These ideas were extremely revolutionary when I propounded them, and my articles were bitterly attacked. The whole host of so-called naval experts, but few of them sailors, fell upon me and called me every name under the sun. The idea of submarines laying mines round England became in particular a subject for howling derision, and there were many caustic comments on my notions, under the head of 'a soldier at sea,' which was a favourite text. Moreover, not one of my critics had the grace to write and apologise when all these things came true in the Great War, and this is a pity, as I have kept all their articles and turn to them when I am feeling dull and want cheering up.

We had got on a certain amount when war broke out, but not very far. After our Invasion Inquiry of 1907 the strategic disposition of our fleets was changed, and the general principles of naval defence which I had advocated against Germany were adopted. The Fisher-Wilson policy of scratching at the Baltic and using the Army to capture German islands and mess about off the German coasts was, fortunately, abandoned after a certain eventful Cabinet meeting when this strategy came up for serious review and, after examination, was unanimously condemned. But we had at first no safe naval bases for our fleets in the North Sea, and all our arrangements on this side were most inadequate. The old admirals never allowed us to have

dirigibles, and we consequently found Germany with the monopoly of strategic reconnaissance at sea by way of the air. We had no mine strategy and consequently no mines. Our excellent Army Submarine Mining Engineers, and all their valuable plant, had been scrapped at naval dictation and nothing had taken their place. I doubt whether the people who made this decision knew the difference between a contact and an observation mine. We had not adopted, when the war broke out, the expedients which I had advocated for hunting the submarine, and though these came later they came uncommonly late—in fact, after a large proportion of our mercantile fleet had been sunk.

I put down the whole of the naval disappointments during the war to the want of a War Staff and to the absence of a serious thinking department at the Admiralty. This came indeed, or at all events it was initiated, in Winston Churchill's day; but then war was just upon us, and it takes many decades for a thinking branch to study history and the facts of the present day, to work out strategy and tactics, to invent the instruments needed by these tactics, and to create a sound doctrine of the conduct of war. The result of our neglects belongs to a period with which I am not at present dealing, and the time has not yet come to discuss it.

Our experiences in the Great War have been so terrible and so tragic that I have looked back over my old articles written during the ten years preceding the war in order to remind myself of the line which I adopted in military policy at home, and of the warnings which I gave of the German danger. My first outburst, when I took up a mightier weapon than the sword, was in *Blackwood*, and it was directed against the system of passive defence which distributed all our auxiliary

forces round London in the event of war and used them up in the extravagant garrisoning of defensive lines. Everything that I had seen and thought of war had convinced me that in an Empire like ours, and with an unarmed people at home, we had need, as Ralegh once said, to hold the enemy aloof. The only way to do so on the military side was to organise field armies for attack in order to give the enemy so much employment abroad that he could not attack us at home. One of the first *Times* articles that I wrote was on 'The Fortress Incubus,' in which I attacked the principle and practice of building fortresses—not naval bases—and showed up their uselessness and the drain they imposed upon a State. I thought they had caused, in history, greater harm than any good that they had done, and I was strongly of opinion that the best base on which an army could fall back was not a fortress but live reinforcements.

Before long we managed to scrap all our passive defence ideas both at home and in India, and though I still thought that certain garrisons abroad and at home were extravagantly numerous, these were chiefly maintained for naval purposes, and as the Navy was sacrosanct they could not be touched. But in all the new organisations laid down by Mr. Haldane in England, and by Lord Kitchener in India and Australasia, we created field armies before anything else, and the advantage was immense. When the administrations of these two men began we could not place three complete divisions in line at home, nor more than four in India. When these administrations ended we had twenty divisions of infantry, a cavalry division, and fourteen mounted brigades at home. In India we had nine divisions, and a division was in sight in the Mediter-

ranean, while Australasia was moving on the same lines. All this was effected by pure downright organisation, not by extravagance, and the reason why we were able to cut so good a figure in the war before the new armies were perfected was that we had devoted ourselves to the organisation of offensive war before all else. I supported and promoted all these changes at home, in India, and in Australasia, and I thought, and still think, that it was a better service to the country to have worked on these lines than to have stood out because we could not get all we wanted at once in times of peace. On the other hand, I was strongly in favour of the plan of the National Service League when they did not criticise and impede the work that was being done, and when Mr. Haldane went to the Upper House in 1912 as Lord Chancellor, I begged and implored him to advocate National Service for the Territorials. He would not listen and took quite the other line, whereupon I wrote and told him what I thought of his choice and what would become of him because of it. I thought that he had missed the golden opportunity of his life. I personally followed the advice which I had offered to the Chancellor.

For reasons which I have already given, I do not think that we soldiers could have done much more than we did, with the policy of Parties what it was, and with the state of public opinion as we found it, in the ten years preceding the war. All our money was laid out upon field forces. We managed to get our General Staff and our body of military doctrines, and good methods of staff work in the field. We got our Regular and Territorial divisions, our Cavalry division, our field guns and howitzers, a proper system of requisitioning horses, a change in the billeting laws, mechanical trans-

port, a nucleus of a Flying Corps, and a score of other important things that we had never possessed before. We introduced an excellent system of progressive field training, and much more money was granted for manœuvres which took place regularly. At the same time Lord Roberts and the National Service League combined to hold up before the people the doctrine that the first duty of the citizen was the defence of his country, and the hard work of the Field-Marshal and his League was not without success, for it accustomed the people to the idea of service as a duty, and made them responsive to the call when it came.

In the sphere of foreign politics my reading of history was that we were the natural enemy of any foreign Power which aimed at hegemony on the continent of Europe and contemplated wars of aggression to attain its ends. Spain, France, and Russia had, in turn, occupied this position, and we had fought them all in turn till they succumbed. Insular though we were at home, my study of Napoleon's continental blockade against England had shown me that it had nearly ruined us, and that we could not remain indifferent to its recurrence. When, at the time of the war in South Africa, the jealousy of Germany towards us became manifest; when she began deliberately to build a Navy—for all that the Kaiser might say—against us, and showed a plain desire to pick a quarrel with France while Russia was weakened by the war against Japan and by internal troubles, the chances of war between us and Germany became too manifest to be disregarded. I hated the idea of participating in a continental war as much as the soundest British Radical, but the moment came in 1906 when, if we did not boldly align ourselves with France, this Power was liable to be crushed, and in this

event our position would become so serious that we were bound to prevent it by every means in our power.

I kept my eyes constantly on Germany, and year by year described in *The Times* the tendencies of her policy, her military progress, and the effect of all her military laws. I had the greatest admiration for the discipline of her people and for the methodical German organisation, but I had much less admiration for her troops, which I did not think so good as our Regulars or the French. I always paid the debt that was due to the discipline and the organisation, and even covered them with praises, but when I last attended the German manœuvres in 1911 I exposed the weaknesses of the three arms, not only because these weaknesses existed, but because opinion was everything in war, and it had become a danger to us and to the French to allow the notion to prevail that the Germans were invincible.

My report on these German manœuvres was widely quoted at home and abroad, and caused violent resentment in august circles in Germany. I was at that time editing *The Army Review*, a new organ of our General Staff which I had been largely instrumental in creating in order that then, and later on when we were all dead, the doctrines of the General Staff should become widely disseminated and understood. The Kaiser seized upon this, and ordered his new Ambassador in London, Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, to see Colonel Seely, then Secretary for War, and to demand my dismissal from the position of editor. The Ambassador received a very crisp answer for his impudence, but never knew how he had scored off me. My intention had been to give up this work when the Staff journal was in going order, and as this moment had come I wished to pass on the work to some one else.

But it was impracticable for Colonel Seely or for me to submit to German dictation, and therefore I had to remain on for six months or so, much against my will.

I had often adverted in *The Times* to the danger of a German violation of Belgian soil, but in the year 1911 I formed certain definite conclusions on the subject on purely military grounds and stated them in four articles of *The Times* in January. First of all, it was clear to me that after the great Moltke's death the military appearance of Alsace and Lorraine had greatly changed. In Moltke's day the zone of concentration of the German armies against France had been on the line Metz-Strassburg, with three-quarters of the troops on the line Metz-Saverne and one-quarter on the line Saverne-Colmar. So at least it was believed, and it is certain that little was done in Moltke's day to defend the zone of concentration by fortifications, showing that, in his opinion, this zone would be defended by the armies and by their forward march.

But immediately after Moltke's death the work of fortifying both Alsace and Lorraine began with feverish activity, and the appearance of the Reichsland was soon transformed. It became covered with fortifications. Metz and Strassburg became fortified regions with perimeters of 47 and 30 miles respectively, and on all sides there sprang up fresh works showing that some new plans were in project, but no one could say definitely what they were. My reading, given in *The Times*, was that the strength and preparedness of the French armies, the powerful French defences, and last but not least the requirements of the German tactics of envelopment, and the growing numbers of the German armies, all cried aloud for an extension of the front of German strategic deployment. I said that those who watched

the German proceedings in the not wholly futile belief that a plan of concentration could be more or less read like an open book upon the enemy's territory, noticed with interest that the detraining stations at Metz had been gradually tripled, and that at Treves and all along the Belgian frontier between Trois-Vierges and Aix-la-Chapelle a fresh base of concentration was in course of preparation. What was apparently clear, I said, was that the axis of the future attack on France had been shifted to the north, and that a great, if not the main attack would be based upon the line Cologne-Coblentz, and that the neutrality of Belgium was threatened by this new departure of German strategy.

I then went on to explain the German theories of the enveloping attack in order to show how they supported my reading of German intentions. These theories, I showed, all started from the point that the enormous increase of fire effect gave much more importance each year to the enveloping form of attack and rendered tactics of penetration more and more difficult. I then showed that all the German training manuals, the books published by leading soldiers, and the practice of German generals at manœuvres, all conformed carefully with the principles of the enveloping form of attack. I gave a summary of the German manœuvres from 1903 to 1909 in order to show that the advance in line of columns of divisions and the turning of a hostile wing had been the invariable practice.

From this I turned back again to the French frontier and showed that seventy-two German active and reserve divisions deployed in line of columns of divisions at intervals of five miles would cover a front of 360 miles, and though I did not suggest such a crude deployment, I had to say that the length of front given was more

than twice that of the French frontier from Belfort to Longwy. I also showed that General von Falkenhausen, in a book which he had recently published, had calmly assumed as a matter of course that the territory of both Belgium and Holland would be violated by the contending armies, and that this general had placed his 1,250,000 men on a front of 250 miles, which was again much in excess of the length of the French frontier.

I then showed how the defences of the French frontier limited the space for the deployment of the German armies. I showed that the *trouée* of Belfort was closed by that fortified region, and that an advance in this direction would bring a German army not only within the quadrilateral Epinal—Langres—Dijon—Besançon, but also into the narrow valleys between the Monts Faucilles, the Langres plateau, and the Jura, which no one could describe as an inviting theatre in which to apply the German theories. I admitted that the Luneville–Neufchateau *trouée* was more practicable, but that as large French forces would be found here with their flanks resting on Epinal and Toul I saw no chances here for the execution of methods of envelopment. Lastly, I pointed to the *trouée* of Stenay, north of Verdun, and thought that through this narrow neck, twenty miles broad, between the most northerly fort of Verdun and the Belgian frontier, no one could hope to apply the German tactics with success.

This argument led me up to an inevitable conclusion, and I gave it. I said that we were face to face with two alternative suppositions. Either the principles of strategy and tactics inculcated by German regulations, recommended by all the greatest German authorities and writers on war, and invariably practised at

manœuvres, had no application whatsoever to existing conditions, or else they had been adopted in full knowledge that in time of war space for deployment would be found by the violation of neutral frontiers. Between the two alternatives, I concluded, every one could make his choice, and this choice might be facilitated by recollection of the opinion of the German General Staff, expressed in *Der Schlachterfolg*, that exclusively frontal engagements are a real danger, and that only a sane conception of war can prevent them.

These articles, and the conclusions which seemed unanswerable and exactly corresponded with what happened in 1914, created a great impression. They were widely quoted, and were printed in the official papers laid before the Belgian Parliament to support the Bill upon Army reform in 1913. Looking back now, after Germany's base treachery has been consummated, I am wondering whether the great Moltke refused to be a party to such a villainy as his successors planned, and whether this is the reason why the change in the Reichsland to which I alluded began immediately after his death. Let us hope, for the repute of this great man, that this was so. But the Kaiser? How can he have been ignorant of the treachery planned years before? It was not possible.

I may also say that I had been confirmed in my reading of German intentions by the Dutch Defence Bill which had been laid before the States-General late in the year 1910. This Bill demanded £3,200,000 for expenditure upon coast defences and the Navy, and I saw at once in whose interests, and probably at whose instigation, this scheme had been framed, since it gave not one crown to the neglected eastern defences of the Netherlands, and devoted all the money to the defence

of the coasts which were already fairly strong. In particular, a great armoured fort at Flushing to control the lower Scheldt was planned, and it became as plain as a pikestaff that the whole thing was a German plant to protect their right flank and rear when they violated Belgium, and to prevent us from succouring Belgium by the Scheldt. This gave me a good opening to explain to the British public the vital importance to them of the preservation of the Dutch maritime position, which technically, as I said, must always include Antwerp, from Germany's grasp. I described the whole system of defence and made a strong criticism of the German-inspired ideas which were leading Holland into dangerous paths, and were inviting her to resist the succour of Belgium by the Scheldt, which I claimed the guaranteeing Powers had the right to use under express and binding agreements. The scheme distinctly reduced the value of Antwerp to Belgium, and appeared to contest the right of the Powers which had guaranteed Belgian neutrality to use the Scheldt in execution of their treaty obligations. I do not know whether the British Government did anything at all. Probably they understood nothing of the perfidy which was already being planned; but, whether this was so or not, it is certain that we had neither the policy ready, nor the ships built, to save Antwerp when the need arose in 1914, and that the fall of Antwerp was largely due to the shameful neglect of our interests in a region where they were, and always must be, vitally concerned. I could not do more than make the whole case perfectly plain to any who wished to understand it. I think that I did, but with a Foreign Office that lived in cloudland and with an Admiralty ignorant of strategy, we allowed the Germans to jockey us out of Antwerp as they

pleased. The valiant Churchill-Seely attempt to shut the door after the steed was stolen unfortunately came much too late. One does not beat a country like Germany by eleventh-hour improvisations.

As to the German Naval and Military Laws, I described them all from time to time as they came out, but need not refer to these matters now since there was no mystery about them. All that was needed was industry to dig out all the details, and a modicum of lucidity in explaining their consequences. The Germans thought that the effect of their new Laws would be to give them undisputed predominance on the Continent of Europe, but the gallant reply of the French, and then the unexpected and extraordinarily important projects of army reform in Russia, threatened not only to equal the German sacrifices but completely to outtop them. I should say that somewhere about January 1913 the extent and importance of the Russian projects became known in Berlin, and that it was then settled in principle that the Central Powers should forestall their rivals by war. I am only judging on military grounds and not from the inside diplomatic history of this time. I knew what I, if a German staff officer of the Junker type, should have decided to do after learning these Russian projects, and I assumed that the German General Staff would conclude that if they allowed the Russian reforms to come to maturity the Central Powers would be beaten. From this conclusion to a decision to act was but one step. Bismarck's detestation of preventive wars was completely out of favour with the modern German school.

As to England, I imagine that the German Government did not expect us to take the field, and did not worry much if we did, persuaded as they unwisely were

that they would destroy the French Army before the help which we brought could count for much. I feel certain that the idea was to attack us after Germany had settled things with France and Russia, and the condition of affairs in England in 1914 must have appeared to favour this scheme. What were we all doing in the first half of the year 1914? Most of us were either in or watching Ulster, and totally diverted by the danger of a collision in Ireland from contemplation of the storm-clouds piling up in Europe. The remainder of us were bent on a tremendous revolt of Labour, and the Labour situation had never been more dangerous. I was in Ulster myself, visiting the Ulster camps and parades, and deeply interested in the extraordinary movement which had all my sympathies. The interest blazed up again when the famous gun-running exploit succeeded in April. I was in Northamptonshire and received a wire on April 25 from General Richardson, the excellent commander of the Ulster Volunteer Force. It read, 'Night operations most successful. All through, no casualties. Richardson. Strand Town.' Yes, it was a great movement, admirably organised and directed by Sir Edward Carson and all the Protestants of the north, and I can never forget the stern enthusiasm of the people and the tense strain of the time. Is it wonderful that foreign diplomatists, especially those best informed, should have utterly disbelieved that, with Ulster and serious Labour troubles coming to a head, and with the whole country rent and distracted, we should have recovered ourselves all of a sudden and have joined France with enthusiastic unanimity?

No, it was not wonderful. But what was wonderful was the abrupt cessation of all our internal troubles which seemed serious and almost desperate, and the

hush that fell upon England in face of the mighty danger from without. It was no one man's doing that suddenly England became united, strong, and of good courage. It was the valour of the race that shone out when the great test came, and the Government found at its disposal an enthusiastic and wholly united people.

So we went into the Great War as in honour bound by our treaty obligations, and I must reserve for another volume, and for some future date, an account of my experiences in the course of the great contest.

APPENDIX

MEMORANDUM ON INVASION[1]

I PROPOSE to take the strategical hypothesis of a German invasion which Field-Marshal Lord Roberts has suggested to you, and to follow it up step by step, placing myself in the position of a German staff officer, and considering the whole problem from his point of view. My statement falls under the following heads :—

I. Distribution and strength of the German army so far as relates to the problem under notice.
II. Facilities for concentrating an expeditionary force at the German North Sea ports.
III. German merchant service.
IV. Types of merchant steamers and their characteristics.
V. Proportion of tonnage to men for an expedition of a given strength and composition.
VI. The German ports of embarkation on the North Sea coast.
VII. Time taken to embark.

I am unable to assume in advance which particular points of detail the Committee may decide to be the greater, and which the less, which will be included in the greater; in fact, I assume that the Committee cannot decide this question till they have heard the evidence, and it may be that they will have some difficulty in deciding even then.

I

DISTRIBUTION AND STRENGTH OF THE GERMAN ARMY

The peace strength of the German army for 1907 is 626,000 all ranks, with 134,500 horses.[2] It is my belief

[1] Memorandum read before the Committee of Imperial Defence.

[2] This includes 25,111 officers, 84,712 under officers, 500,664 rank and file, about 10,000 one-year volunteers, besides doctors, paymasters, etc. The horses include officers' chargers, etc. See 'R.M.E.,' August 1907.

that the force necessary for invasion might be found without resort to regular mobilisation. Such mobilisation might take from three to five days, and would therefore be more likely to come to our notice. It will rather be the normal procedure of the covering troops on the frontiers, an example of which is given in our notes, that will be the type. I produce for the Committee the *Karte der Standorte des Reichsheeres.* It is dated 1905, but as German garrisons change but little, and army corps regions have not varied since it was published, it is almost up-to-date. Such changes —they are almost exclusively additions—as have since taken place can be judged by the *Einteilung* of this year, which I also beg to hand in.

There is one point about German peace effectives to which I desire to call attention. By Article 60 of the Law of the Constitution of the Empire of the 16th April 1871, the peace establishment of the army is 1 per cent. of the population. The population numbered 41 millions at the census of 1871, and the peace strength was then over 400,000. With each succeeding census the peace strength has been raised, so that as the population was 60,641,278 on the 1st December 1905, the peace strength is now over 600,000. As the population increases the peace strength steadily rises year by year, whereas with us it rises and falls for a variety of reasons well known to every member of this Committee. The service periods are now two years with the colours, except for mounted arms, and five years in the reserve of the active army, but I believe three years with the colours is still the legal term. Of the *Landwehr* formations it is unnecessary to speak, since they would probably not enter at all into the problem under discussion. Reserves are recalled for training as may be required, for periods varying from twelve to fifty-six days. A reservist of the active army is liable to two periods of training, each of fifty-six days, during his five years. In 1906 345,000 men were recalled for training, making a million men under arms at one time or another during the year.

The recruit is theoretically taken on the 1st October of the year in which he completes 20 years of age; actually only one-half of the yearly contingent are 20 years of age, one-quarter are 21, and one-quarter are 22 years.[1] Thus,

[1] *L'Armée Allemande*, published under the direction of the Second Bureau of the General Staff of the French Army, p. 95.

although the service is short, the men are older than our young entry at home. They are naturally superior in physique and education, because the army has the pick of the population instead of the residuum. Neither service nor training periods are rigorously maintained. The system is large and elastic, and Budget figures merely represent the number of men and days of presence rather than the strength at any particular date. Men can be retained in service at need, or called up as may be desired, so long as the Budget figures are not exceeded at the end of the financial year. There is a pool from which men can be drawn to replace waste in peace, and there are re-engaged men. Thus, though the highest peace strength of a battalion is 683 all ranks, and the lowest 590, while the same figures for the artillery are 132 and 107 respectively per battery, it would not prove at all a difficult matter to make up battalions to 1000 strong, and batteries to their full complement[1] for war, 150 all ranks, without any very unusual measures, especially in the autumn. Recently some battalions have been made up to 800 strong without causing any remark All this business is decentralised, and would be carried out by army corps commanders. Normally the recruits of the infantry contingent embodied on the 1st October are ready for service by the middle of the February following; the company training ends about the middle of April, and the battalion training about the 1st May, when the infantry is ready for war. The artillery is similarly ready by the middle of June.[2] In a military sense from June to October inclusive, and especially September and October, represent the best months for a German oversea expedition, drawn mainly from peace strength increased in the manner indicated. June to October are also, so far as a landing on our east coast is concerned, the most favourable months in respect of weather in the North Sea. The mean annual direction of the wind is from the west. January and November are the most stormy months in the North Sea, and east winds may be expected during March, April, May and November. December only remains, and I may remark that Von Moltke considered December a favourable month for his project against Zealand, because the equinoctial gales had ended and the nights were long. It is possible that the training of recruits might be slightly curtailed in

[1] *L'Armée Allemande*, p. 498. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 511.

case of need. In 1870 recruits with eight months' service marched.

You will see from our Invasion Example that we take 120 battalions and 34 batteries for our example of an expeditionary force which the Germans might employ. You will see from the map that the two army corps, IX and X, which share the North Sea littoral, can supply 50 batteries, or more than are required. The batteries are shown by conventional signs, each gun representing a battery, and you will notice that there are six batteries each at Güstrow, Schwerin, and Itzehoe, three batteries each at Rendsburg and Altona, while the X corps can supply the rest from Verden, Celle, and Oldenburg. None of these batteries are more than about 60 or 70 miles from the ports of embarkation. The IX and X Corps, exclusive of all their reserve formations, can supply 53 of the 120 battalions, and the remainder could be found by any non-frontier corps, for example, by the II, III, IV, XI, XII, XIX, or Guard Corps, in any proportion or in any manner that might be desired. All these battalions could be found within 200 miles or so of ports of embarkation, and many are much nearer, and even at the ports themselves. Cavalry could be drawn from the four cavalry brigades, 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th, in the regions of the two coastal army corps. There are a number of alternative ways in which the expedition might be made up. Our conclusion on this point is that the provision of an expeditionary force of the suggested strength and composition presents no serious difficulty.

II

Facilities for Concentration

The units not actually in garrison at the ports of embarkation would for the most part reach these ports by rail. I produce, for the information of the Committee, the best map of the German railways, corrected up to the 15th April of the current year. A study of this map shows what very great facilities exist for the rapid conveyance of troops to the ports from their garrisons, all of which are on railway lines and near a station. All the entraining stations prepared to assist a rapid concentration upon a land frontier are naturally available to assist a concentration on the coast,

and I need not add anything to what is contained in our notes on the subject of the number and length of sidings at or near the ports themselves, and of the many branch lines which enable trains of troops to be delivered directly on all or most of the important quays. I have dealt with the theory of railway strategy and with the German system in a recent book, and I need only recall a few main points. The Germans can move 30 trains in 24 hours on single and 68 on double lines, and I should hesitate to accept any estimate less favourable to them in this particular case, even though 48 trains on double lines may be the rule in larger movements. Each military train takes a mobilised unit complete, squadron, battalion, or battery. In the case of completely mobilised units, infantry take ¾-hour to entrain, cavalry 1 hour, artillery 1½ hours, and supply units 1½ to 2 hours; 22 trains can be despatched every 24 hours from each entraining station, and 8 trains can normally be emptied at each arrival platform within the same time—at all events, in the zone of concentration in a land frontier. The average speed of military trains may be taken at 30 miles an hour for this operation. In a movement to the coast there does not appear to be anything, so far as the army and railway sides of the question are concerned, to prevent the arrival at a port of the last unit of the expeditionary force from 24 to 36 hours after the first order to act has been given, and I am inclined to reserve a factor of safety here and call it 24 hours. The concentration of 150,000 men on the coast represents a far simpler affair than a great movement of 1½ millions of troops to a land frontier, and many difficulties inherent in the latter operation do not arise. No absolutely certain estimate can be made, because a calculator will desire to know more details than any one outside Germany can hope to learn. But I have no doubt that if the Committee care to accept the numbers we suggest, and the manner in which the units might be strengthened without a formal mobilisation, the German section of the Director of Military Operations' branch, with the assistance of a thoroughly competent railway engineer acquainted with modern railway developments abroad, could work out any problem of concentration for any given ports, and get very near to the truth. I should mention also that there is a body in existence—though its existence has been somewhat precarious at times—called the War Railway Council. It has

some good names on its list of members, and it might be asked to test the results worked out by the other experts.

For the purposes of our argument, and assuming the ships are ready—a subject I will come to presently—assuming also that the slowest ship can only steam 13 knots, and that strategic transport by rail occupies as much as 36 hours, the operation works out as follows: The order arrives, for example, at 8 A.M. one Thursday morning; by 8 P.M. Friday the last unit is embarking; the passage from the most distant port used, namely, Hamburg, to the Forth, distant 480 miles, takes 38 hours, allowing for the river navigation, and the slow ships arrive at 10 A.M. on Sunday morning, 74 hours after the receipt of the order to act. The fast liners with the mass of infantry, covered by cruisers, can arrive at dawn or earlier on Sunday, and when they are cleared their boats become available to give help to the cargo ships, which may be less provided with boats.

III

Shipping Available

For the purposes of our inquiry, and with the help of competent mercantile marine officers, we reconnoitred the German North Sea ports to investigate those matters which might seem, in naval eyes, to demand sea experience. Considering that Germany has over 3,000,000 tons gross of steam-transport, our estimate that 400,000 tons of German and British shipping can always be counted upon in German ports appears to me extremely moderate; but the Committee will doubtless take count of the much larger amount that might be assembled, nominally for some commercial purpose, without attracting notice, or in the event of strikes or special circumstances. We have no doubt that 300,000 to 400,000 tons could be assembled in the North Sea ports alone, German shipping exclusively, by the exercise of the slightest foresight.

Lieutenant T. C. Knox, late R.N., stated in *The Times* of the 28th December 1906 that there were in Hamburg on the 20th March 1903 twenty ships of the Hamburg-America Line of 127,986 tons, and in Bremerhaven, on the same day, eight ships of the North German Lloyd of 65,427 tons. He added that on the 25th January 1905

there were 188,000 tons of German shipping in Hamburg, and on the 30th May 1905 200,000 tons. Lieutenant Knox declared that he had visited nearly every German port of consequence, from Emden to Danzig, and that he was convinced that Germany would never need to refrain from attempting an invasion for want of sufficient transport. To this evidence I should add that in the 22 days of last month, 4th to 26th October, 12 liners of the Hamburg-America and North German Lloyd reached Hamburg and Bremerhaven with a total tonnage of 193,688 tons. I can give the names [1] of these ships if the Committee wishes to have them, and also the lists of these two fleets, giving the tonnage of all the ships. I may remark that these 193,688 tons belonged to the American service alone, and that the Hamburg-America Line maintains 56 regular steamship services throughout the world. Our belief is that the necessary amount of tonnage can be found, and it is common knowledge that every year the amount of German tonnage increases.

In order that it may be known for certain exactly how this matter stands, we venture to suggest that the Committee might make arrangements that the tonnage present at all German ports in the North Sea and the Baltic should be counted on one day in each month throughout the year, and on four days in each month during September and October. An estimate of this character cannot be made by private individuals without great trouble and expense, whereas the Government has its Consular officials who might be employed to do the work. The difficulties which we experience in arriving at precise estimates with regard to available tonnage will not be felt by the Germans, and may possibly not be felt by this Committee if it cares to make exhaustive inquiry. The arrivals and departures of all ships working on regular lines of trade can be calculated weeks in advance, subject of course to the reservation of a margin for accidents and delays. It is only the tramp steamers which are uncertain. I should also notice the big liners for tours round the world which might be used for purposes of an expedition, and also the small steamers

[1] Hamburg - America Line—*Deutschland*, *Pennsylvania*, *Kaiserin Auguste Victoria*, *President Grant*, *Blucher*, and *Amerika*. Total, 107,461 tons. North German Lloyd—*Grosser Kurfürst*, *Kaiser Wilhelm II.*, *Friedrich der Grosse*, *Kronprinz Wilhelm*, *Gneisenau*, and *Kronprinzessen Cecilie*. Total, 86,227 tons.

which are referred to in our notes. The latter include boats which run to and from the Frisian Islands and other points in the vicinity. This service is suspended early in September, and the boats would then be available as transports.

The next point is the time taken to prepare the vessels for sea. This was given by Mr. Balfour at two days, which appeared to us reasonable until we had investigated the subject. It was obviously impracticable for us to go round German companies and to ask them to tell us the exact situation of all their ships in home ports, and how soon they could be ready for sea. Therefore we took the next best evidence that the nature of the case admitted, and made a survey of the shipping at Liverpool on the 7th of the current month. We interviewed as many owners as possible and wrote to others. Our inquiries showed that on the day mentioned there were 129 British steamships in the Liverpool and Birkenhead systems of docks, of which 98 were 1000 tons net or over, and 31 of less than 1000 tons net. All ships of 250 tons net or under were discarded. The gross tonnage of these 129 vessels was 571,045, and the net tonnage 339,589.

Replies were received from the fourteen Steamship Companies. These deal with 55 ships of 351,906 tons gross, which represents 61·6 per cent. of the total gross tonnage in the port on the day named, and thus cover a field sufficiently wide for our purpose. You will see that the Companies report that 81·8 per cent. of their ships could have gone to sea in 24 hours or under, and the Table shows how much of this tonnage would have been available in 6, 8, 12, 15 and 24 or more hours respectively. The owners were told that the ships could be used full of cargo, or part full, or empty, as the case might be, and that the risks to cargoes would be borne by certain parties concerned. We laid no stress on crews, because we thought that the voluntary system of land and sea service in Britain and the compulsory system in Germany made a comparison on this head useless.

Attached to the Table there is an extract from the report of Captain Fry, Marine Superintendent of the Leyland Line, which happened to possess the largest amount of shipping in Liverpool on the 7th November, namely, 66,222 tons gross. Captain Fry's report gives the exact situation

of the 10 ships of his Company in respect of readiness for sea, and shows the amount of coal on board each ship, coal consumption per day, water ballast, amount of cargo on board, and time taken to get the engines ready.

You will see that 9 ships out of 10 were reported as ready for sea in 24 hours; the tenth was undergoing extensive repairs. The Committee will notice that only 2 of the 9 steamers had less coal on board than would have been required for a journey from Hamburg to the Forth and back, and they can calculate how short a time it would have taken in these two cases to ship the small additional amount required, remembering that 3000 tons have been put on board the White Star Liner *Oceanic*, by hand, in 24 hours.

So far as crews are concerned, our inquiries at Liverpool have shown that most of the officers, engineers, and petty officers are kept by the steamers and would be ready at once. Firemen and sailors would have to be engaged in the case of British ports, but Captain Fry thought that one to two hours at the outside would be required to get them on board if they were ready. We do not venture to define precisely what the German action would be with regard to crews, since we have not sufficient evidence on the subject to justify us in doing so; but our opinion is that, as the sailing of all ships other than the steamers taken up as transports would be suspended, as the wages offered would probably be high, and as the naval and other reserves might be used to make up deficiencies, we should be imprudent to speculate upon any inability on the part of Germany to make up in due time the crews of the 30 or 40 merchant-steamers which might be required for the purposes of invasion.

So far as fittings are concerned, none would be required for infantry, and only lashings for artillery and waggons to make all secure for the voyage. We have been accustomed to make elaborate fittings for the transport of horses, but it is probable that these could be dispensed with, and that peat moss litter on the horse decks, stout head-stalls, and secure fastening of horses' heads to rails, chains, or ropes stretched along the horse lines would be adequate in calm weather. Large droves of horses reach the London docks from northern and other ports without any of the elaborate fittings which we rig up for the mounted arms, and Lord

Lovat's yeomen from the Western Isles reach the mainland every year, with their horses, at the dates fixed for training, without any delay for weather or other reason, and without any special fittings. We are informed that Companies that have been forced to install special fittings when carrying horses for our army generally discard them as useless when returning to their normal trade.

On the whole, therefore, we consider, first, that the difficulty of providing sufficient tonnage, which Mr. Balfour assumed in the case of France, will not arise for Germany; and secondly, that over 80 per cent. of the tonnage engaged in normal trade may be ready for sea in 24 hours, exclusive of tonnage which might be specially prepared.

IV

Types and Characteristics of Ships

To enable us to estimate the amount of deck-space available on cargo boats of comparatively small tonnage, namely, 1000 to 4000 tons, we obtained the opinion of Messrs. Ramage and Ferguson, shipbuilders, of Leith. Their letter has been handed to your secretary and printed for circulation. The letter is accompanied by a graphic, which I may describe as a sort of 'Form at a Glance,' also printed, which shows, in particular, the deck-space available upon vessels with one or two decks only of the various types mentioned in the letter. In this estimate the necessary deductions have been made for hatchways and engine and boiler-houses. If the Committee care to work out the deck- and hold-spaces in terms of men on the Board of Trade basis of nine square feet a man,[1] or any other basis, they can do so from this graphic, and the same thing is true for guns and waggons if the Committee make use of Appendix VI.

If Messrs. Ramage and Ferguson's figures are contested, I suggest that they be asked to give evidence before the Committee. We venture to propose that it would be more

[1] 'The clear area of the deck in square feet is to be divided by nine, and the quotient is the number of passengers allowed to be carried on deck.'—Clause 23, p. 12. Instructions as to the Survey of Passenger Accommodation. Board of Trade, 1907. For Excursion Steamers see Clauses 33 and 34; these allow less space than Clause 23 which is for the Home Trade, *i.e.* from the United Kingdom to Europe, from the Elbe to Brest inclusive (Clause 16).

satisfactory that in all matters which concern merchant shipping, whether for transport of men, horses, or material, and on questions of ship or boat capacity, draught, navigation, especially of rivers, number of ships that can pass through locks at one tide, fresh-water supply, and other details, evidence should be taken at first hand from representative experts of the mercantile marine who are accustomed to deal in a practical manner with these problems and are entirely independent of all official connection. I need not point out to the Committee that neither three- nor four- nor five-decked ships are estimated for in the graphic, neither are liners, and it is on liners that we think the mass of the infantry would probably be embarked.

I propose now to deal with liners, and with what I may call cargo-passenger steamers, which are valuable craft for the purposes of an expedition, as the Japanese discovered in the late war. The types vary a good deal, but the German types, we are informed, are practically the same as ours. We thought it best to cover rather a wide field in order to assist this Committee to strike an average and arrive at some practical conclusions. We have therefore taken nine different types of liners or cargo-passenger steamships, varying in tonnage from 6583 to 23,875 tons, and in speed from 12½ to 21 knots. We have also taken two smaller cargo steamers of 3251 and 5614 gross tons respectively. The staff of the White Star Line have been most helpful in working out for us for a short journey the carrying capacity of these ships, all of which belong to their fleet. The work has been done in such a manner that the Committee can hereafter make any assumptions they please as to men, horses, guns, waggons, deck-spaces, dead weight, or any other detail, and still work out the results from the drawings, which are all to scale. I hand in these drawings with the request that they may be printed to accompany my evidence, and that the originals may be considered confidential and may be returned to me. You will see marked in red figures without brackets the number of men that these ships can accommodate for a short voyage on their various lower decks only, according to the calculations of the staff of the Company. The numbers have been specially calculated for each ship, according to conditions of light, ventilation, accessibility, and so forth—conditions which are, we assume, well known to the staff of the line,

though they are not known to us. The red figures in brackets which occur in some of the drawings represent alternative numbers, which can be carried in certain parts of the ships if temporary alterations are made, occupying a few hours to execute.

The Committee will observe that the upper decks are left completely free, and that their superficial area is given in square feet, and not expressly in terms of men, though the two are readily convertible. The totals at the bottoms of the drawings show the number of men who could be carried on both the upper and the lower decks for a short voyage of two to three days. It will also be seen that the whole of the lower holds are left vacant, but the number of tons of 40 cubic feet which can be carried in each hold-space is written plainly, except in the case of the two smaller ships, so that the Committee may judge how much tonnage as above, whether carriages, ammunition, or supplies, can be carried in addition to men in each ship. The drawings, with the same two exceptions, show in detail the spaces reserved for coal, engines, machinery, fresh water, water ballast, stewards' rooms, store-rooms, and so forth. Some ships are adapted to carry live stock—for example, the *Georgic*, a beautiful ship for transport purposes, which can take 907 head of cattle on its cattle decks. In Germany the Woermann Line steamers have, we understand, similar arrangements, and there are said to be German steamers trading with the Argentine and the River Plate which are also fitted up for the same trade. Some ships have larger hold capacity than others—for instance, the *Suevic* and the *Georgic*. In the fastest ships much space is taken up by machinery, as in the cases of the *Oceanic* and *Majestic*; and, generally speaking, the slower the ship the greater its hold capacity.

The hatchways are also shown. They vary in number from a minimum of five on the *Majestic* and the two smaller ships *Floridian* and *Asian* to a maximum of ten on the *Arabic* and *Georgic*. The number and size of hatchways is important if the embarkation of horses, carriages, and material is to be carried out rapidly, since upon this depends the number of quay cranes, or ship's derricks, which can be employed at the same time. The sizes of all hatchways can be measured in the drawings, and it will be seen that the great majority are large enough for all the purposes of this expedition.

Men can be accommodated in the holds if the hatchways are removed; but, assuming that this is not done, whether because the whole or a part of the cargo is on board when the ship is taken up, or because the holds are required for the material of the expedition, the nine ships give the following results when the upper decks are used for troops, assuming the White Star figures to be correct for the lower decks, and if the Board of Trade rule of 9 square feet is adhered to for the upper decks.

Ship.	Gross Tonnage.	Dead Weight Capacity.	Speed in knots.	Total.	Hatchways.
		Tons.		Men.	
Oceanic . .	17,274	13,290	21	9,746	7
Majestic . .	10,147	7,150	20	7,261	6
Arabic . . .	15,801	13,260	15½	15,338	10
Adriatic . .	23,875	19,710	17	16,820	6
Cymric . . .	13,096	12,930	14	13,470	9
Ionic . . .	12,232	13,320	12	8,841	7
Suevic . . .	12,500	15,435	12½	9,055	7
Georgic . .	10,077	12,580	12½	13,749	10
Bovic . . .	6,583	8,550	12½	10,983	6

The total for these nine ships works out to a carrying capacity of 105,263 men for 121,585 gross tons. This is exclusive of all the lower holds, which we are told by two mercantile marine authorities can be used for men if the hatchways are removed. The Committee will observe how much the employment of a fast ship like the *Oceanic* drags down the average of men carried per ship. Of the two smaller cargo boats, the *Floridian* type of 3251 gross tons takes 3798 men, including upper decks, and the *Asian* of 5614 tons takes 5630 men; or over a man per ton in each case, holds again excluded.

The question of fresh water bulked rather largely in the report on this subject drawn up some years ago. You will see in the drawings how much fresh water is carried, and where. On all docks, German as well as British, there are now stand-pipes, and if a ship were short when the rush began she could as usual take in supplies by hose till she hauled away. Most steamers carry distillers, and every modern steamer has fresh-water tanks nowadays, because sea water is bad for boilers. It is a common thing for the

White Star ships to leave with 1000 tons of fresh water on board. All that would be necessary to arrange would be the distribution of the water among the men, but this would present no difficulty.

There is only one other point to which I have to direct the attention of the Committee so far as the ships are concerned, namely, the question of draught. We assume that for the purposes of this operation the Germans might use many ships not completely cleared of their cargoes. Troops themselves weigh very light; 1000 men, fully equipped, at 200 lbs. each, weigh 89 tons, and we desired to know what draught would be likely to result if ships were taken up light, or with $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, or full cargoes. A table has been prepared for us on this subject by the White Star Line, and a graphic by Messrs. Ramage and Ferguson. I wish to draw particular attention to the differences in the draught at varying loads, because this affects three questions :—

1. The ports and quays where troops can be embarked.
2. The ports which they can use for disembarkation if any such ports are available.
3. The distance from shore at which ships must anchor in the event of a disembarkation on the open beach.

It is impossible, of course, to state what the draught of any particular ship would be at a given moment, since this would vary with circumstances; but we are advised that, given 6 to 36 hours for clearing holds not already empty, in view of the machinery which exists in the form of cranes, quay railways, lighters and tugs, and in view also of the light weight of armed men in comparison with normal cargoes of ships, the average draught of steamers, with men embarked on them, might be somewhere between the figures shown for $\frac{1}{4}$ and for $\frac{1}{2}$ cargoes. The liner would, however, probably have a draught between the figures shown for light and $\frac{1}{4}$ cargoes. I give these figures as an indication, and offer no opinion on them. I should add that we are advised that liners in light trim would probably steam about one knot faster than with full cargoes.

Another reason why this question of draught is of importance is because the Germans have a decided partiality for small undefended harbours for unloading their horses and material, and it is necessary to realise that relatively un-

important harbours will serve their purpose if horses and material are carried in ships of suitable draught. According to the graphic, a 1000-ton cargo steamer draws under 9 feet at ¼ load and 11½ feet at ½ load. A 4000-ton ship at ½ load could ascend the Forth as far as Alloa, 16 miles above Queensferry, and the river below could be obstructed at Kincardine or elsewhere very easily by sinking a few ships in the fairway.

V

Proportion of Tonnage

The Committee will notice the considerable difference between our example of the tonnage required for an expedition and the estimate given by Mr. Balfour in 1905. He took less than half the number of men that we do, one-fourth fewer guns, but double the number of horses. His tonnage worked out from 3 to 3½ tons a man, for he gave two estimates, and ours works out to 1½. I have never seen the detailed estimates given to Mr. Balfour, nor do I know by whom they were drawn up, or on what basis,

I will first show cause why we take 1 ton a man and 4 tons a horse; additional cause, that is to say, to the evidence already tendered in regard to the capacity of ships and Board of Trade rules. The Admiralty letter of the year 1757 shows in a very conclusive manner that the Admiralty scale at that time, even for expeditions of a month's duration, was 1 ton a man all included. The largest figure I can find mentioned in Wellington's despatches from the Peninsula is 2 tons a man, and this is for the conveyance of sick and wounded, many, if not most of whom, as the Duke said, would be lying down.

I had many conversations during the Russo-Japanese War with Colonel Utsunomiya, the Japanese Military Attaché in London, on the subject of transport, and he informed me, as I have mentioned in my book on that war, that for the infantry division, everything included except horses, the regulation scale was 1½ tons a man. You will, I understand, find this confirmed in our Attaché's reports on the war, vol. v. p. 115. As I was attacked on this subject in *The Times* by Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge, I referred the matter to Major-General Shiba, the present Japanese

Military Attaché, who replied on the 30th September of this year as follows:—

> 'In reply to your question, I have much please in writing to you that our regulation base of the proportion between steam tonnage and infantry is 1½ tons per man, as Colonel Utsunomiya seems to have told you. I feel, however, sure that above proportion might have often (been) reduced in the case of a short voyage of only a few days to 1 ton per man, and even less than that in certain particular cases that (when) we were sure that the voyage was only for two or three days.'

You see that this practical people does not take its figures from the Defence Committee of the first maritime nation of the world.

I now turn to the German theory on this subject, and I find that the latest edition of General Bronsart von Schellendorff's *Duties of the General Staff* (p. 213), follows very closely the Japanese rule. Von Schellendorff divides voyages, as I think we should do, into short, ordinary, and long, and two nights on board are technically described as a short voyage. For an ordinary voyage the German authority lays down the rule of 2 tons a man and 4 tons a horse, but he adds, 'it is obvious that for a short voyage a ship may be able to carry twice as many men as for an ordinary voyage.' This aligns the German with the Japanese practice, and besides we have another Board of Trade rule which is, according to a letter from Lord Ellenborough published in *The Times*, 1 ton gross per passenger. I fancy that is taken from the Merchant Shipping Act, but I have not investigated the point.[1] The other Board of Trade rule of 9 square feet a man gives approximately the same result when applied to any two-decked ship and worked out by Ramage and Ferguson's graphic. Combined with the detailed distribution of men on our eleven types of liners, cargo-passenger, and cargo-steamers, this evidence appears to show that the figures which were given to Mr. Balfour for his speech of the 11th May 1905 stand in very

[1] Instructions as to the Survey of Passenger Accommodation. Board of Trade, 1907, p. 14, Clause 25. 'In the cases of vessels requiring Steam 2 certificates the total number of passengers allowed is in no case to exceed the number denoting the gross tonnage of the vessel.' But see Clause 32 which abandons this rule for Excursion Steamers.

considerable need of revision so far as a short voyage of two or three days is concerned.

I beg to point out to the Committee the uselessness and the danger of those generalities which are so often given us on this subject in lieu of facts and figures. We must know how many men, horses, guns, carts, and waggons have to be carried; how much ammunition and supplies; what all these things weigh, and whether dead-weight or deck-space are the deciding factors. When all these things are estimated for, and when we know whether the voyage is short, ordinary, or long, we can arrive at some idea of the gross tonnage, and not before. I have handed in an example of such estimate in which these matters are briefly accounted for in sufficient detail to illustrate our argument. This example works out to 1½ tons a man for 150,000 men; men, horses, guns, carts, waggons, ammunition, and supplies included. This, I may mention, corresponds exactly with the scale laid down by Lord Wolseley for a short voyage, though I was not aware of the fact when I made the calculation. We lay no stress upon our example except as an indication of the nature of the detail which the Committee should, we respectfully submit, have before them before accepting again such figures as those of 3 and 3½ tons a man which some one or other presented to the Defence Committee between 1903 and 1905.

I beg to point out that in our example given we have allowed double the deck-space for guns, carts, and waggons that the superficial area occupied by these things requires. We have done this in order to avoid questioning on a point of detail. The measurements of British types of these articles are stated in another paper which gives the result of actual measurements on the ground. The amount of hold-space which would be vacant in most of the types of the White Star ships is so very great that, even if ships of such types were taken up with half cargoes still on board, I make no doubt that we could carry any additional impedimenta that any one might consider necessary, any amount of clothing, medical and other stores, and as much more supplies as we might have time to place on board. Let me remind you that a week's supplies for the whole force, horses included, comes only to 2330 tons. Ships like the *Cymric* or the *Georgic* could, if cubic space permitted, carry this amount in one, or one and a fraction, of one of their forward

holds, as you will see from the drawings. I may also point out that even in a ship like the *Adriatic*, which has comparatively small hold-space—small, that is, compared with the *Georgic* type—you will see that there is hold-space for nearly 5000 tons each of 40 cubic feet left unoccupied in our calculations of the carrying capacity of this ship. I mention these things merely to show to the Committee the large amount of space which might remain unused if not used for men. Lord Roberts, I understand, would be prepared to start with fewer guns, horses, and impedimenta, and less ammunition than I have allowed for.

I have, however, calculated it all out on a liberal scale, so that no one may be able to cavil at the military equipment of the expeditionary force, even though it may remain without reinforcement from home during the campaign.

We have not had time to go into the question of horse transports as thoroughly as we hope eventually to do. Therefore I have taken the German scale of 4 tons for a short journey, though Lord Wolseley, who was a master of detail, gave the figure at 2½ tons. The records of our last war may supply the Committee with the means for forming a judgment, allowing of course for the different length of the voyages.

We have before now been obliged to allot a somewhat confined space to men on board river-boats, at all events, notably throughout the three years that the Nile Expedition lasted, and no harm whatever has resulted. In 1898 the voyage from Cairo to the foot of the Shabluka Cataract implied rail to Assuan, boat to Wady Halfa, rail across the desert, and then four or five days on board again to Wad Habeshi. This must be considered something between an ordinary and a long voyage so far as space for men is considered, especially in view of the great heat in the Soudan at the time. We allowed, to the best of my recollection, and I am confirmed by Brigadier-General Sir Henry Rawlinson, 18 square feet of deck-space for British and 12 square feet for native troops, and there was room for people to move about and lie down. The double-decked barges which we used for carrying troops averaged 40 to 45 tons dead-weight capacity, and carried 220 men each—that is to say, 1 ton for 5½ men. But as the barges were towed it is necessary to add in the tonnage of the gunboats which towed them. The largest or *Nassir* class

was of 250 tons displacement, carried a guard of some 50 men, and drew 4 barges. Total tonnage for each gunboat with 4 barges, 410 to 430 tons; men, 930, or less than half a ton a man all round, besides stores and supplies of 100 to 150 tons weight. I hand in a letter from the present Sirdar, Sir R. Wingate, confirming these figures. The gross tonnage of the barges was, I think, much less than their dead-weight capacity. Personally I think that, comparing one military staff problem with another, considering the respective means at disposal in the two cases, and omitting the question of naval risk, a German expedition to England presents less difficulty than that involved in keeping from 18,000 to 22,000 men in the field for three years at a distance of some 1500 miles from their base in a country which produced nothing, and with a line of communications which implied breaking bulk at least at four points.

The ideas which have hitherto prevailed on this question of sea transport at home have, I think, been due to the fact that considerations of time and space have never obtruded themselves very much, and that all our oversea voyages have been more or less long. To save themselves trouble, or for some other reason, people appear to have taken figures for a long ocean voyage and to have applied them to a short journey. Usually, besides, they make an enemy choke himself with the lumber which he drags over a continental frontier to fight an armed nation. An exceptional operation demands exceptional treatment.

VI

German Ports of Embarkation in the North Sea

We consider that the following ports on the North Sea coast of Germany are those most suitable for the embarkation of troops. On the Ems River, Emden; on the Weser, Bremerhaven, Geestemunde, Nordenham, Brake, and Bremen; on the Elbe, Cuxhaven, Glückstadt, Hamburg, and Harburg. These are all connected by rail with the interior. Wilhelmshaven, though very suitable, may be considered as reserved for naval uses.

I omit Brunsbüttel and the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal, as

well as all the Baltic ports of Germany, for the following reasons: The maritime means required for the despatch of an expedition of the strength assumed appear more than sufficient at the ports named, and there is therefore no reason why we should go further afield, whatever the Committee may decide to do.

We have not yet reconnoitred the Baltic coast nor considered all the problems connected with its use in war. I think, on the face of things, it is possible that Germany might send from 10,000 to 50,000 men from the Baltic, whether through the Canal or through the Belts or both, to take part in an expedition. But as I have not yet worked out the problem, I shall merely assume that some fast ships from the Baltic, conveying an indeterminate number of troops, are sent with the expedition, either to assist it or to go 'north about' round Scotland in order to invade Ireland and chain our troops in that island to the soil while the main operation is in progress and until it is concluded. Lord Roberts considers it is practically certain that this would be done. Their orders would be to land on the northern or western coasts of Ireland and to keep the field for seven weeks, occupying the attention of the local garrison. Their numbers would be decided by the value placed in Germany upon our Irish garrison. There was an operation in Ireland in 1798 by 1000 Frenchmen, who held the field for 17 days, defeated the second-line troops opposed to them on four separate occasions, captured 11 British cannon, entirely occupied the attention of all the available troops of a garrison of Ireland 100,000 strong, penetrated almost to the centre of the island, and compelled the Lord-Lieutenant to send an urgent requisition to London for 'as great a reinforcement as possible.' I make no doubt that the precedent will be remembered.

The following are the main facts connected with the use of the ports named on the North Sea coasts:—

EMDEN[1] (Chart 2593) has an outer harbour 1500 yards long and 150 yards broad, with 26 feet alongside the piers at low water and 35 feet at high water. The basin or inner harbour is entered by two locks, the largest of which is 394 feet long, 49 feet broad, and has a depth of 21½ feet at high

[1] *North Sea Pilot*, vol. iv., 6th edition, 1901 (and supplement, 1906), p. 173, supplement, p. 30.

water. The basin is 2600 yards long, 300 to 500 feet broad, and has accommodation for several large vessels (15 according to the *Pilot*) alongside the quays, with depths of 19 to 23 feet. There were 11 electric travelling cranes working on rails on the quays in 1901.

BREMERHAVEN,[1] the headquarters of the North German Lloyd Company (Chart 3346), has four basins, of which the Kaiserhaven is 5000 feet long and from 375 to 970 feet broad, giving an area of 47 acres with a depth of 31 to 36 feet; the sea lock has 34½ feet over the sill at high water and is 759 feet long by 91¾ feet broad. The *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse*, 649 feet long and 66 feet beam, has been docked here. The aggregate tonnage entering is about 3,000,000 tons a year; 217,000 tons belong to the port. The annual value of the trade of the port is about 100 millions sterling.

GEESTEMUNDE[2] (Chart 3346) adjoins the above and has a basin 1734 feet long and 400 feet wide; the lock has 26 feet over the sill at high-water springs. There is a tidal basin southward of the mouth of the Geeste; it is 1400 yards long, about 90 yards wide, with 14 feet at low water at the entrance and 18 feet at high water alongside the quay on its western side.

NORDENHAM (Chart 3346) has an iron-built quay facing the river, 3000 feet long, with never less depth than 24 feet alongside. Vessels can anchor in the stream in 6 fathoms at low water.

BRAKE[3] (Chart 3346) admits vessels of 16½ feet draught to its harbour, and ships of 24 feet draught can ascend the river. It has an iron quay 700 feet long, and vessels of 22 feet draught can lie alongside at low water. There is a wet dock 1120 feet long and 400 feet broad. The lock has 19½ feet on the sill at high water.

BREMEN[4] (Chart 3346) has three tidal basins; of these the Friehaven is 6000 feet long, 400 feet wide and 27 feet deep. Ships drawing 18 feet can ascend the river to Bremen at ordinary high water; 200 cranes were counted here.

CUXHAVEN[5] (Chart 3261) has a new deep-water harbour

[1] *North Sea Pilot*, vol iv., p. 189, supplement, p. 36.
[2] *Ibid.*, vol. iv., 6th edition, 1901 (and supplement, 1906), p. 190, supplement, p. 37.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 191.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 191, supplement, p. 38.
[5] *Ibid.*, vol. iv., 6th edition, 1901 (and supplement, 1906), pp. 197. 205, 206.

available at all times of the tide, 1066 feet long, 820 feet broad, with a depth of 26 feet at low water. Alongside the Alte Liebe Wharf ships drawing 16 feet of water can lie. There is also a fishery harbour with a low-water depth of 10 feet. There is a good anchorage N.E. of the lighthouse in 6 to 7 fathoms.

GLÜCKSTADT has an outer and inner harbour, the former with 19½ feet at low water. The latter is 1968 feet long, 230 feet broad, with a depth of 10 to 17 feet at high water.

HAMBURG[1] (Chart 3262) has a water area of 950 acres and quay accommodation of 13½ miles in 1901, and now of 18 miles, according to our reconnaissance report, for sea-going vessels. Vessels up to 24 feet draught can ascend to Hamburg under normal conditions, but depths are being increased by dredging, and were in 1906 32¾ feet at high water, with a navigable channel one cable in width over the various bars. There are 400 cranes on the quays, according to the *Pilot* for 1901, but now double this number, according to our information. The depths of the various tidal havens giving direct access to river and sea without locks are as follows at low water: Segelschiff, 21 feet; Baken, 20½ feet; Petroleum, 19½ feet; Grassbrook and Sandthor, 18 feet; river quays and Strandhaven, 19 feet; while the three new havens recently opened have 24 to 26 feet at low water. The value of the exports and imports was 255 millions sterling in 1905. Belonging to the port there were, in 1901, 725 sea-going vessels of 856,719 tons and 50 tugs. Vessels either lie alongside the quays at Hamburg or are secured to dolphins, where they can load from lighters, some of which carry as much as 1800 tons.

HARBURG[2] takes vessels up to 4500 tons, and the Kohlbrand, which unites it with the Elbe, is now dredged to the same depth as that river. The new tidal docks here are nearly finished, and 100 cranes are available on the quays, according to our information. Any changes that may have taken place in these figures will have been improvements, since dredging operations are continuous, and fresh plant of all kinds is constantly being added.

We stated in our notes that 114 ships 600 feet in length could be simultaneously loaded alongside the quays at the

[1] *North Sea Pilot*, p. 210, supplement, p. 56; *Elbe Navigation*, supplement, p. 41.
[2] *North Sea Pilot*, p. 213, supplement, p. 57.

ports we had selected. We should not require 114 ships, nor probably much more than a third of that number; we simply take 600 feet as a convenient unit of measurement. That our estimate is most moderate can be shown by the fact that Hamburg alone had in 1901 13½ miles of quays available for sea-going vessels, or, in other words, for 118 ships 600 feet in length for this one port alone, had we cared to work on such an evaluation. This, however, was not the case. We sent our expert round, and when he came back we discussed every harbour with him, eliminating all likely to prove in any way unsuitable, and measuring all quays and basins, leaving over a large margin at every port for sailing and other craft which could not be employed. We took for preference the deep-water harbours and havens not separated from sea or river by locks, and when we used wet basins we made very moderate demands on them so that no delay might be caused in getting to sea. If we are granted our 114 quay spaces of 600 feet, and the ships average only 2000 tons, there is enough to carry the expedition, but obviously 600 feet is an excessive length for the average of ships, while 2000 tons is much too low for the average tonnage, since we should reckon upon the use of several liners up to 10,000 and 20,000 tons. I do not think we should want much more than 30 or 40 transports in all, but of course the number would depend upon tonnage and suitability to the purpose. You will notice that the 55 steamships at Liverpool on the 7th November last made up 351,906 tons, or an average of 6398 tons per ship.[1]

On a review of the whole case, therefore, we submit that all idea that the ports named cannot despatch, practically simultaneously, the number of ships named, and *a fortiori* their equivalent in a smaller number of ships of larger tonnage, cannot be entertained. I suggest that large-scale plans of the harbours named with a scale of yards and feet should accompany this evidence.

[1] 36 Hamburg-Amerika Line steamers in Hamburg (29) and in other German ports or close to the coast, 6th January 1908, were of 211,884 tons, or 5884 on an average; therefore 38 ships required for the expedition.

VII

Time Taken to Embark

It has already been suggested that many ships may be used with part of their cargoes on board, and it may be assumed that the first troops, other than those in garrison at the ports, begin to arrive at the quays some 6 hours after the receipt of the first order, and continue to arrive until 36 hours after the receipt of the same order. Consequently there will be from 6 to 36 hours' time to arrange the ships in the most convenient berths, and even at different harbours, havens, or basins than those in which they may happen to be; to unload a certain amount of cargo, if required, from such ships as have cargoes on board when the order arrives, and to ship a certain amount more coal. As ships are filled with troops they will presumably leave the basins and anchor in the river or other roads till the whole are ready to start. 'The process of embarking men,' says Von Schellendorff, 'is similar to that of entraining.' Given sufficient gangways, infantry can be placed on board with great rapidity, and this part of the business presents no difficulties. The infantry should consequently appear last on the quays, and be last embarked.

The German principle, explained in their *Duties of the General Staff*,[1] is to use special horse boats for horse transport, and not to endeavour to send each lot of horses with their unit. Most British officers object to this practice, but I will follow the German rule. Von Schellendorff's rule [2] is that 100 horses can be embarked in 5½ hours with one crane. If six cranes can be used 600 horses can be embarked in the same time. I have already shown that there are 400 cranes at Hamburg alone according to Admiralty information of 1901, and double this number according to our information now; these work on rails upon the quays and can be placed opposite the various holds as required. If seven ships of 4000 tons are engaged for horse transport each to carry about 1000 horses, and six cranes are available for each, the 7000 and odd horses might be embarked in some 10 hours; consequently none should reach the ports more than 26 hours after the receipt of the

[1] 4th edition, p. 212. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 214.

order. If six cranes could not be used it might become necessary to take up a larger number of smaller ships and to place fewer horses in each, but after considering the drawings of ships handed in and the splendid plant available at German ports, I do not think this would be necessary. I restrict myself to cranes for embarking horses, because the German *Staff Duties* does not mention any other means. But obviously if gangways can be employed embarkation is much more rapid. In the 1896 manœuvres we embarked horses at the rate of 100 per hour with a single gangway. The White Star agent at Boston is of opinion that 500 trained horses could be embarked on a modern steamer in very little over two hours.

For waggons, the German embarkation rule[1] is 100 waggons in 7 hours with one crane. There are, all told, under 1500 guns and waggons in my example of an expedition. Distributed among, say, 30 ships, there would be 50 guns or waggons per ship, and their embarkation would take 3½ hours with one crane only to each ship. If the whole of the wheeled vehicles were placed on board 8 special ships, each of 4000 tons, there would be 187 carriages to go on each ship, and their embarkation would take under 7 hours with two cranes to each ship, or of course half this time with four cranes.

As regards the reserve ammunition and supplies, the probability is that all this would be sent in advance to Cuxhaven or one of the naval ports, and embarked quietly, ostensibly for colonial purposes. The total weight of this material, excluding the supply carts, would be under 7000 tons with packing, and this is not a serious matter to handle with modern plant, so far as the embarkation in German ports is concerned.

It must also be remembered that the ports possess a great number of tugs, lighters, and horse-flats which might be used during the process of embarkation to ease the strain at the quays, while there are many river-side towns like Brünshausen on the Elbe accustomed to deal with large movements of passengers and emigrants by means of landing piers although possessing no important harbours or havens. I watched the embarkation of the French army for Madagascar at the Mediterranean ports; they used lighters to bring much of the material to the ships.

[1] 4th edition, p. 214.

All this business of embarking troops is attended to in Germany by the Department of Sea Transport. This department inspects all steamers of the mercantile marine suitable for use as transports. The steamers are all surveyed and registered; their tonnage and capacity are accurately known, and all measurements, plans, and working drawings for fitting them out are prepared. It is doubtless for this reason that the *Staff Duties* book of the Germans[1] says that 'embarking troops on our own shores, where piers, landing stages, barges, horse-flats and cranes are available, should be an easy matter if proper preparations are made beforehand.'

From all this evidence which we have collected, the Committee will judge how right Mr. Balfour was to suggest that speed might be more within the German reach. The ships, as he says, are brought by the natural course of trade to the ports of embarkation, and this eliminates the two days which he allowed for concentrating the transports in the case of France. We have shown that inability to collect sufficient transport cannot be counted upon in the German case. We think that ships may be prepared to embark the troops within the time taken by the latter to arrive, namely, from 6 to 36 hours, instead of the 2 days allotted to this work in Mr. Balfour's estimate. I have also shown, with German precepts as guides, that 2 days are not required for embarkation, as was previously assumed, but only a few hours for each ship and each arm. Thus it seems to be materially possible that an operation which was calculated to take 6 days in the case of France before a transport left port may be carried out by Germany within the space of 36 hours.

From a study of all existing conditions which I have described under the last seven headings, we reach this general conclusion, namely, that what we may call the staff or mechanical side of the operation of despatching an expedition from the North Sea ports of Germany of sufficient strength to invade England presents no difficulties than can be regarded as insuperable or even serious, and that such an expedition can be embarked within a period of time which we must reckon rather by hours than by days.

(The remainder of this Memorandum referred to our own arrangements and is therefore omitted.)

[1] P. 214.

Invasion Example

Weights and Tonnage.

Assumption: 150,000 men and 204 guns. (34 batteries each 6 guns or howitzers.) Of these, 120,000 infantry and pioneers; 10,000 cyclists and dismounted cavalry; 10,000 artillery; 10,000 Staff and departments.

Small Arm Ammunition.

S.A.A. say 1000 rounds a man, of which 150 on the man; 100 in company carts with the battalions; remaining 750 rounds per rifle to be brought over in boxes, and to follow the invaders in requisitioned waggons.

To carry 100 rounds a man for 120,000 men there will be required 833 German S.A.A. carts for first-line supply. Each weighs 8·7 cwts. empty (1897 pattern), and carries 14,400 rounds, weight 9·7 cwts. The 833 carts weigh 362 tons, and the S.A.A. amounting to 12 million rounds weighs 404 tons.[1] Each cart has two horses. The reserve of 750 rounds a man weighs 3030 tons. Total weight of carts and ammunition 3796 tons. To find tonnage of shipping required for carts, the deck-space occupied is the deciding factor, rather than the dead weight; 833 carts at 100 sq. feet a cart,[2] harness included, occupy 83,300 sq. feet. Four double-deck cargo steamers of 4000 tons gross each, or 16,000 tons in all, can carry the carts and take the S.A.A. reserve of 3030 tons weight in their holds. The carts require 1666 horses, which need 6664 tons gross of shipping on German scale of 4 tons a horse, and this will include forage for voyage.

Total shipping required for whole S.A.A. supply, including carts, horses, and harness = 22,664 *tons gross.*

Machine-Gun Detachments.

10 detachments, each 6 guns, present German war strengths, but with 4 horses a gun only: 60 machine-guns in all, each detachment requiring 500 gross tons transport. 5000 *tons in all.*

[1] 225 cartridges go to a (Packhülse) box: weight 17 lbs.: 64 boxes go to each S.A.A. cart.

[2] For superficial areas actually covered, see Appendix.

Artillery and its Ammunition.

Weight of German field gun (1896 pattern) with limber containing 36 rounds is 34 cwt. Weight of new field guns[1] approximately the same. Weight of German artillery waggon-body and limber with 88 rounds is 35 cwt. A German battery of 6 guns, 6 waggons, and 2 other carriages (one of 2 horses, all the rest of 6), weighs 24 tons, or say 30 tons including harness and spare parts, but excluding men and horses. With the battery so formed there are 744 rounds, or 124 per gun. Thirty-four batteries as above give 476 carriages including guns, and weigh 1020 tons: the number of horses will be 2720 draft and 944 saddle:[2] total 3664. With above there might be six light ammunition columns. Each of these, of the German type, has 21 6-horse waggons containing 1848 projectiles, or 54 rounds a gun for 204 guns: 126 waggons at 35 cwt. each, or 220 tons, with 756 horses.

This supply gives 178 rounds a gun, all told. To make up to 1000 rounds a gun, all told, 167,688 more projectiles must be taken and loaded up on requisitioned transport after landing. Weight of German field artillery projectiles, shell or shrapnel, old and new, is 15 lbs., and of the separate cartridge 2 lbs. 8 oz. Weight of 167,688 projectiles and cartridges 1310 tons: or say 1500 tons with packing. Total weight of whole artillery material, including guns, waggons, and ammunition, is 2740 tons. The deciding factor is again deck-space. There are 602 carriages, all told. At 150 sq. feet[3] per gun with limber, or per waggon, these will require 90,300 sq. feet of deck-space. This can be found by 4 double-deck steamers of 4000 tons gross, or 16,000 tons in all. These vessels can take the 2740 tons of ammunition in their holds. The 4420 artillery horses require 17,680 tons gross of transport, including forage for voyage.

Total shipping required for whole artillery material, ammunition, and horses, 33,680 *tons gross.*

Supply Carts.

Two per unit: weight 14 cwt.,[4] two horses. There are 170 infantry, artillery, and machine-gun units, 340 carts,

[1] 1770 kilogrammes: the 105 mm. howitzer is 1950 kil. behind teams.
[2] 27 per battery (saddle). [3] See Appendix. [4] 750 kils.

or say 400, including Staff and departments. At 100 sq. feet per cart these require 40,000 sq. feet deck-space, which can be found by two double-deck steamers of 3500 tons gross each, or 7000 tons in all. These carts require 800 horses, or 3200 tons gross transport.

Total 10,200 *tons gross*, including forage for voyage.

Supplies.

Five days with each man embarked, including two days for voyage.

In addition, one week's forage for 7286[1] horses at 20 lbs. a day a horse = 455 tons weight: one week's rations for 150,000 men at 4 lbs. a day = 1875 tons.

Total weight reserve supplies 2330 *tons*, distributed in holds of shipping.

Gross Tonnage for Expedition.

Assumptions: A voyage of not over 2-3 days. Allowance 1 ton a man, 4 tons a horse. Allowance for material as above estimated.

150,000 men	150,000 tons
Infantry S.A.A. with carts and horses .	22,664 „
Artillery: guns, waggons, ammunition, and horses	33,680 „
Supply carts	10,200 „
Machine-gun detachments, horses included	5000 „
Grand Total,	221,544 tons.

[1] Horses: 1666 S.A.A.; 4420 artillery; 800 supply carts; 240 Maxims; 160 Staff.

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